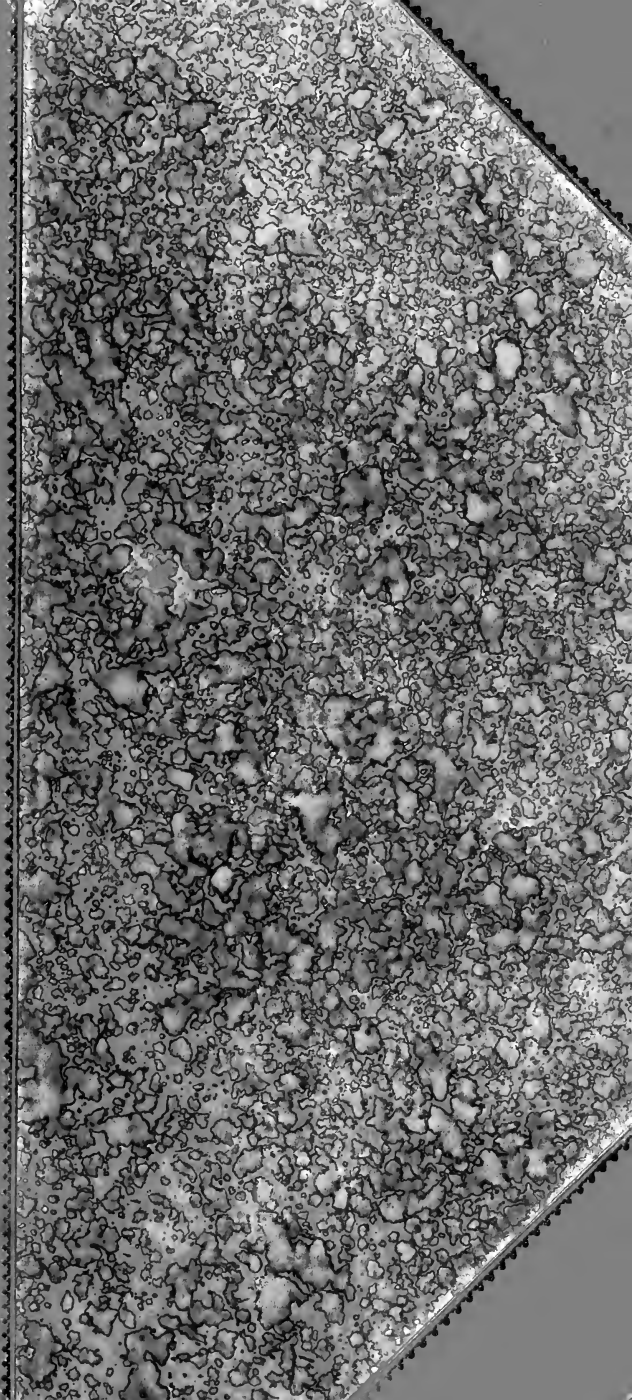


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# CONSTANCE D'OYLEY.

A TALE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“THE CLANDESTINE MARRIAGE.”

[*Ellen Miller*]

I do no fors, I speke right as I mene.

CHAUCER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1844.



2.1

# CONSTANCE D'OYLEY.

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## CHAPTER I.

Thou mak'st a testament  
As worldlings do, giving thy sum of more  
To that which hath too much.

AS YOU LIKE IT.

“THEN you won't come to see me, Constance?” said her uncle Thornton.

“I must beg you to excuse me,” replied his niece, still keeping her eyes on her work.

“You won't?”

“If you persist in giving so rude a form to my denial, I *won't*,” she replied, half smiling.

"You don't know what a fine place I have down in Herefordshire."

"I think I do: it is engraved in that new work of gentlemen's seats."

"Pshaw, the house! I could make you very comfortable," pursued the old gentleman, "and I like you because you are so odd."

"For ten minutes, uncle," said Constance looking up steadily in his face; "in ten days you would find my oddness clash with your own."

"And how do you know but I might leave you a fortune," continued her uncle.

"Fortune!" muttered Constance, half inaudibly; but the flash of contempt which passed over her face was more intelligible than words.

"Ay," said her uncle sharply; "how are girls to expect to settle in these days without money? And you, too, who have no beauty."

"I am very well aware I have no beauty," said Constance, in a quiet tone.

“Something very like it though, now ;” said her uncle leaning back in his chair, and contemplating her as he would a picture ; “ now, that I have made you angry.”

“ Yes, angry,” replied Constance, “ and with one of your sex, that is the bitterest reproach which can be addressed to a woman ; and you are not one from whom I will take reproaches.”

“ I cannot think what makes you so inveterate against me,” said her uncle.

“ You have not been kind to papa and mamma, that is all ;” replied Constance.

“ Not given them money enough, I suppose ?”

“ Not given them countenance enough ; little kindnesses—things that would have cost you nothing—”

“ But trouble ;” grumbled uncle Thornton.

“ Just so. For instance, a word from you would have obtained the cadetship for Harry, and you know how that matter has ended.”

“ In a curacy I suppose. Well, but then the trouble—I am not used to take any.”

“ And you have no right to expect it from others,” returned Constance. “ I have no particular wish to go into Herefordshire, and I will make no sacrifice for one who can make none in his turn.”

“ You are a very odd girl,” said her uncle, surveying her as if she were a natural curiosity.

“ Am I ?” said she folding up her work, “ I didn’t know it.”

“ Where are you going, Constance ?”

“ Into the green-house.”

“ Well, I don’t care if I come with you ; I have not seen your green-house.”

“ It is not worth seeing, you have better ones at Leyton ; and I really wish, uncle Thornton, you would not follow me about.”

While uncle Thornton is in the green-house, it may be as well to state that he was a single gentleman of very large fortune, and verging upon the convenient age of seventy-six. How many greedy eyes



were fixed upon his hoarded wealth may easily be supposed, now that in the course of nature he must so very soon relinquish it. Every attack of the gout was noted down in twenty tablets, and poor uncle Thornton's altered looks were made the source of hypocritical condolence by twenty trembling heirs expectant.

Of these, the most likely to succeed, and therefore, of course, the most distressed at any failing symptom, was one Mrs. Parker, his widowed sister, whose own means were so ample, that perhaps she was even less to be sympathised with than most of those miserable harpies who, to use the terms of one of our most expressive proverbs, 'look out for dead men's shoes.' She had a large family of her own, all established in wealthy mercantile concerns, except her second son, the fine gentleman of the family, who contrived by virtue of his office to run through a great deal of money, and who, being much more insolent to the old gentleman than occasion ever re-

quired, even the occasions of his goutiest exactions, was thought in a fair way to be the old man's heir.

In fact, he had Frederick Parker's picture painted and hung in the dining-room at Leyton after one of their stormiest quarrels, as if he really meant that one very happy day he should preside there as master in good earnest.

Mrs. Parker spent most of her time at Leyton ; her own villa at Fulham was damp, Leyton was agueish, but it never affected her.

If her brother was ordered to Cheltenham, she must escort him thither. If he went to see a friend, she had long owed the dear man a visit too, and could not let her brother go without her. Uncle Thornton was hardly ever out of her sight.

The fact was, that he did not much wish it ; there is in female attendance, however interested, or however scantily rendered, something so soothing to an invalid, so absolutely essential, that he was well con-

tented to carry sister Parker about with him as head-nurse, and looked upon the pensioning her off handsomely at his death, as an act of justice which must be rendered to her in common with his other and more regularly enlisted menials.

How, indeed, he ever would have the assurance to sit down, and in her very presence concoct a will, wherein sister Parker's name should not figure in capital letters, was something that she could not comprehend, and with her good guardianship should never happen.

The only person who felt no interest in the disposition of his property was Mrs. D'Oyley, the mother of Constance, his youngest niece, who having early offended him by her marriage with a poor curate, had quietly submitted to almost a total estrangement from her uncle; and taking it for granted that she should not benefit by his death, was perhaps the only one among his numerous relatives who really took pleasure in seeing him alive.

A sort of reconciliation had been patched up between them. Mr. D'Oyley had been presented by his patron, the Earl of Bevis, to an excellent living. There were but three children to diminish his income, and they lived in comfort and some elegance ; so uncle Thornton, finding himself in their neighbourhood, had left his *Argus* for a single night and had dined and slept at the rectory. Mrs. Parker was to bring the carriage for him in the course of the morning, and in the meantime he was bestowing his tediousness upon his great niece, Constance.

Mr. D'Oyley was a finished gentleman, and had welcomed his guest with due politeness. Mrs. D'Oyley received him with more warmth, she recognised those ties of relationship that it takes so much to obliterate ; but Constance, who despised her uncle from her heart, and deeply resented his neglect of her parents, hardly vouchsafed him a word uncalled for, and put the most decided negative upon his friendly advan-

ces ; and yet he had taken a violent fancy to her,

Thus runs the world away.

“ Well, this is a pretty little greenhouse,” said Mr. Thornton.

“ Scarcely room to move, you see,” said Constance as she brushed past him ; “ I beg your pardon, I must reach this rose-tree.”

“ What ! are you going to gather the only rose in your collection ?”

“ I am, indeed ; it is my tree though,” said Constance, laughing.

“ Why, what can you want with so choice a nosegay ?”

“ We are going to a party to-night.”

“ Any thing particular ?”

“ No, only just our own neighbourhood.”

“ And so you are resolved to make yourself very smart ?”

“ This is not for me,” returned Constance. “ I am making up mamma’s bouquet ; she is so fond of flowers.”

Uncle Thornton stood for a few moments silent ; he almost envied Mrs. D'Oyley a daughter who attended to her fancies without their being expressed.

“ Suppose I stay over to-night, and so prevent your going to your party,” said Mr. Thornton.

“ Why, in that case mamma might think it civil to remain at home with you, but I should certainly keep my engagement with Mrs. Manley.”

“ You could not go alone !”

“ Oh, this is not like London,” said Constance, cutting off a sprig of flowering myrtle with her rose-scissors ; “ nobody would be shocked at seeing me come unattended into a room.”

“ Those are very curious scissors,” said her uncle ; “ let me look at them, I never saw any before.”

“ Made for gathering flowers, you know,” said Constance.

“ Where do you get them ?” asked uncle Thornton.

Constance read the name of the maker on the handle.

Any one other of Mr. Thornton's relatives would have prayed him to accept the novelty, but Constance never dreamed of making a present to so rich a man ; particularly by way of conciliation.

" They were given to me," added Constance.

" Here comes your mamma," said Mr. Thornton advancing to meet her, " now I will tell her how you have been using me."

" Oh, pray don't, uncle," cried Constance, affecting to be frightened.

" What do you think, Mrs. D'Oyley," said Mr. Thornton, " I have been using all my eloquence with your daughter to make her accept an invitation to my house, and in vain."

" I am sure you are very kind, uncle," said Mrs. D'Oyley in a hesitating voice ; she was, with all her disinterestedness, not quite so blind to the probable advantages as her daughter was.

"The idea!" cried Constance, her eyes filling with tears, "to leave papa and mamma for the sake of staying with Mr. Thornton!"

"What do you say to it, Mrs. D'Oyley?" asked Mr. Thornton.

"We thank you very much, my dear uncle, for thinking of such a thing," said Mrs. D'Oyley; "but this is a case which we should leave entirely to the decision of Constance."

Mr. Thornton looked round for her; she was seated on one of the low flower-stands making up a nosegay, perfectly secure that the matter was in her own hands, and, therefore, that the case stood as she had before arranged it with her uncle. At this moment the gate bell rang.

"There!" said uncle Thornton, "there is old mother Parker come to fetch me away; you need not go in to see her, I'll say good-bye here. If ever you want anything, why ask me for it; so good-bye, my dear."



“ Good-bye, uncle,” said Constance, as he left the green-house in company with her mother.

“ Well,” said she to herself ; “ I should like very much to know the meaning of all this, ‘ the English of it,’ as Harry says. I declare I have been very ungracious to Mr. Thornton ; I never was so rude to any one before ; but then he has behaved so shockingly to papa and mamma : at least, I will never go to stay with him. Forgive as much as you please, but still keep out of the way of people who insult you. Now, if that tiresome Cape-jessamine were but blown, mamma would have as choice a bouquet as Lady Hernshaw, with all her conservatories. Now some thread to tie it with, and my rose-scissors ; why,” cried Constance raising her laughing face from a long and ineffectual search, “ I do believe my wicked uncle Thornton has abstracted them !”

## CHAPTER II.

And of a truth she was of great disport ;  
Pleasant to all, and amiable of port.  
It gave her pain to counterfeit the ways  
Of court, its stately manner and displays ;  
And to be held in distant reverence.

CHAUCER.

It was a very select neighbourhood. Sir George and Lady Hernshaw were first on the list. Sir George had made a great deal of money in some fortunate speculations ; Lady Hernshaw was clever, insolent, and well connected ; everybody looked up to her.

The village was made up of a sprinkling of gentlemen's houses, scarcely deserving the name of seats, and a great abundance of cottages ; but none of those little boxes with green verandahs and painted

iron railings, which disfigure the approaches to London, and indeed to most of our country towns.

The neighbourhood did not recognise the existence of any person living in, or very near, the country town which was within two miles of their own village. Not that they themselves were many degrees less vulgar than such people; for among them there was very nearly as much reliance on externals, quite as much love of paltry mischief and wholesale scandal, as might be found in the narrowest street of the aforementioned town. There was by no means an immaculate freedom from ledger and counter in the very highest of these exclusives; and, moreover, many of the townspeople kept a better carriage and dressed in richer satins than the *élite* of the village. It was habit: you cannot break into the charmed circle; you must be born there.

Mrs. Manley was a widow lady with two daughters; Mrs. Dyce a widow with three, but her second was married, in which par-

ticular she had, and felt she had, an advantage over Mrs. Manley. Each lady boasted a son. Mrs. Manley's was an invalid who could not walk down stairs without trembling; Mrs. Dyce's, a gentleman of spirit, who ran through a great deal more money than his mother found it pleasant to pay. Then there were the Brownings, whose family circle, once very large, consisted now of an eccentric old father, two single daughters, both a little declining into the sear, the yellow leaf, and one grandson, as hopeful a youth as ever was sent to sea by his desperate relatives.

It was evening, and Mrs. Manley's drawing-room was in full toilet for the reception of her visitors; chairs uncovered, tables neatly arranged, every thing, in fact, gloriously uncomfortable.

The Miss Brownings had arrived—daring, unpleasant women, who put up their glass to every man they passed in the road, stared him into blushes, or if that were impossible, fairly stared him down, and then

turned and laughed to each other. They were the sort of women who abused old maids, always begged their friends to have men enough at their parties, and who had laughed, flirted, and waltzed thirty years to no purpose. Miss Dyce next made her appearance with her mother, both sensible women, and in great favour with their hostess.

“ But where is dear Louisa ? ” asked Mrs. Manley as Mrs. Dyce took her seat on the sofa beside her.

“ Only confined to the house with one of her tedious colds,” said Mrs. Dyce. “ She regretted very much not being able to venture here.”

“ She reads too much, my dear Mrs. Dyce,” said Mrs. Manley.

“ She does too much of every thing,” said Miss Dyce. “ But advice is wasted on these energetic people.”

Miss Browning took up her eye-glass, and having ascertained, by a very comprehensive stare, that she was dressed in a

very good black satin, and that it was trimmed with very good black lace, she dropped it again, and listened.

“Do you expect Lady Hernshaw to-night?” asked Mrs. Dyce.

“Oh, yes,” said Mrs. Manley; “she will come when the evening is half over, and declare she hurried dinner to be here so soon; then hasten home again with her handsome daughter, on pretence of another engagement.”

“Do you call that girl handsome, mamma?” exclaimed Miss Manley.

“The men call her so,” returned Miss Browning, in a tone that it would have been dangerous to dispute.

“The gentlemen are below with Francis,” said Mrs. Manley. “You know, unless one asks them to dinner, one can never secure them for one’s evening parties.”

“You are quite right,” said Miss Browning. “I say what I think; and parties without men are detestable.”

“ A good many young ladies are of your opinion, my dear,” said Mrs. Manley, laughing.

“ By the by, my dear Mrs. Manley,” said Mrs. Dyce, “ have you heard that young Mr. Forde has returned to England ?”

“ Ay,” said Miss Browning, “ the old man is dead at last.”

“ Well, but,” said Mrs. Dyce, “ I wonder if he intends to reside in the neighbourhood. Such a beautiful house, so finely furnished ! Poor old Mr. Forde never lived to enjoy his work. I wonder where the young man is now ?”

“ In the dining-room,” said Mrs. Manley with an air of great indifference. “ The gentlemen will be up presently.”

“ Mr. Forde in your dining-room !” said Mrs. Dyce with unequivocal surprise.

“ Yes ; he and Francis were great friends before he went abroad you know.”

Mrs. Dyce did not know it.

“ So of course we asked him here as soon as we knew he had returned.”

The young ladies looked at each other. Mrs. Manley had secured the first move ; but they flattered themselves they were not indifferent players.

Lady Hernshaw and her daughter were announced ; Sir George, as usual, engaged ; the mother, richly dressed, highly rouged, sparkling with a most needless profusion of jewels ; her beautiful daughter in the native brilliancy of her own charms, fairly eclipsing her imposing appearance. Every body said they were delighted to see Miss Hernshaw, and everybody devoutly wished her out of the way ; for they could not disguise from themselves the fact that no one of them was likely to be looked at while Miss Hernshaw was in the room.

“ Constance not here ! ” said Miss Hernshaw looking round when the party had subsided into quiet after their reception.

“ Oh, she will be here soon enough,” said the younger Miss Browning ; “ such a disagreeable girl ! ”



“ Such a charming girl, I think !” said Miss Hernshaw.

Every one echoed Miss Hernshaw’s exclamation. Henrietta Browning found herself in the minority ; for Constance was peculiarly gracious in her manners to every body except uncle Thornton ; and—she was not admired by the gentlemen.

The Miss Manleys were now called upon to explain what Mr. Forde was like. Miss Browning asked if he would be a good partner at a ball. Miss Dyce begged to know whether he appeared sensible. Miss Hernshaw, laughing, hoped that he dressed well ; and Henrietta, from the other side of the room, expressed her opinion that if he could not take a second decently in their duets, the man would not be worth a rush to any of them.

Before Miss Manley could reply to these inquiries, Mr. Forde made his appearance in company with the other gentlemen. The Manleys and Brownings contrived to surround him. Miss Manley had a little song

in an Italian dialect, and she was dying to know whether it was Venetian or Genoese. Miss Browning wanted to know the exact size of the Scala, and likewise whether he read music from the clef.

The moment he entered, Lady Hernshaw, by a glance of the eye, imperceptible except to the initiated, made it evident to Isabel that Mr. Forde was not a person to be sought or even attended to more than the merest civility required.

However, Miss Hernshaw was too much of a professed beauty not to feel surprised that a stranger should be three minutes in her presence without displaying an inclination to place himself at her feet. Mr. Forde appeared to her both handsome and intelligent, and she was fond of conquest. She was very much above the vulgarity of directly appealing to his attention ; but she was looking at some medallions, and found herself unable to read one of the inscriptions. She asked Mr. Dyce for a magnifying glass.

Upon his honour he had not the least idea where one was to be found.

Did nobody wear an eye-glass? How provoking! She must trouble Mr. Manley to go and ask her mamma for her reading-glasses.

Mr. Manley, shaking very much, did as he was bid; but Lady Hernshaw had come out without them.

Of course by this time there was some confusion in the room. Mr. Dyce held the medallion up to the candle till it was smoked, in the vain hope of reading the letters; he said they were Greek, and gave them over to a young clergyman who was present. The clergyman declared the inscription to be illegible, and passed the medallion on to Mr. Forde. He looked at it for a moment, and then coming up to Miss Hernshaw, said he was sorry to disappoint her, but he believed there was no inscription at all, merely a wreath of acanthus leaves very nearly obliterated, which ran round the edge of the medal.

Miss Hernshaw protested that she had given a great deal of trouble, and then sat looking at the medallion, and seeming unconscious of the presence of Mr. Forde, who had taken a chair by her side.

At last she laid it down, and said easily by way of beginning :

“ And how long is it since you returned from Naples ? ”

“ About three weeks : but I only came down to Elmsforde yesterday,” he replied.

“ I suppose you know the place and the people as well as we do. I forget whether you resided here ? ” said Miss Hernshaw carelessly.

“ I spent the holidays here when I was a boy. But then we settled in London, and afterwards at Naples, so that every one has grown quite out of my remembrance.”

“ Except the old people,” said Isabel.

“ No, I assure you ! A dozen or so more wrinkles are quite sufficient to include them in my rule of forgetfulness. But I see you

looking towards the door as if you were in anticipation of some delightful arrival. Some lion, I dare say ! Is it to be poet, painter, or traveller ?”

“ Nay,” said Isabel laughing, “ one traveller in a party is enough.”

“ But you do not dignify my poor peregrinations by such a title ? A traveller ought to have penetrated to Cochin-China at the very least. I hope that when you run over to Paris for a new bonnet, you do not imagine that you are actually travelling ?”

“ Something very like it !” said Isabel. “ Do you know last year our carriage got behind a post-chaise bearing home some dead lady ; and we had to creep a hundred miles at a foot-pace, because it was out of rule to pass by *La Morte*.”

“ But that was only a bore, not an adventure,” said Mr. Forde. “ A horde of Tartars now pulling your carriage to pieces, and tumbling out your ball-dresses

on the sand would have been a thing to remember."

"Oh! thank you, I have no passion for such scenes," replied Miss Hernshaw; "but I am looking out for my friend Constance D'Oyley. I suppose she is one of those who have the misfortune to escape your recollection?"

"Let me see," said Mr. Forde, "Mr. D'Oyley was rector here before we left; but Miss D'Oyley might have been in her cradle or her teens for any thing I knew of her. I shall be delighted to hear her description from you."

"A hand-bill description? Dark grey eyes, brown hair, fine teeth! A little above the middle height, and so on!"

"No; I would rather hear the terms on which you consent to call her your friend."

"Oh! that is a much easier task; simply because she is so odd."

"That is not, I confess, a very prepossessing attribute."

“Not to you, I dare say!” replied Miss Hernshaw. “But you need not expect to see a Madge Wildfire make her appearance. Her ideas are odd; but neither is her dress nor her person.”

“Then perhaps *original* would be a better term?”

“I think my own term the best. There are several originals now in the room: but Constance is singular—so disinterested.”

“Is that odd?” asked Mr. Forde smiling.

“Very—very!” replied Miss Hernshaw with emphasis.

The discussion was interrupted by the entrance of Constance with her mother. Mr. Forde’s curiosity was so far raised as to pay particular attention to Miss D’Oyley’s manner and appearance.

She was, as her friend had said, rather above the middle height, of a singularly fine form, which contributed to make her movements graceful and expressive. Her nut-brown hair was parted back almost to the ears, and then fell in profuse clusters

of heavy curls. At the back of the head her soft thick tresses were wound into a large knot, so low as almost to touch the neck. Her brows and eyes were beautiful ; the brow, a projecting edge of brown, finely traced, and a little darker than the hair ; and the eyes of that soft slate colour, so puzzling by candlelight, so expressive under any circumstances. Nothing could exceed the simplicity of her dress ; a pale blue silk with a close fitting boddice and sleeves, unadorned by any sort of trinket.

There was something remarkably pleasing in her manner. Yet her tone, her mode of address, her very smile varied to every person she spoke to. She was so natural, that her aspect was entirely under the control of her feelings. And then her walk, her mode of shaking hands, the very turn of her head was so easy, so different from those young ladies who act always with the hope of a husband before their eyes.

Having spoken to all the ladies, and bowed just perceptibly to the gentlemen



on the hearth-rug, Constance made her way over to Miss Hernshaw and glided into a seat by her side.

“Odd?” thought Mr. Forde. “I would swear I never saw anything less odd in my life.”

“So you have found your way to me at last?” said Isabel as they shook hands.

“Did you not think me very quick?” asked Constance. “Recollect I have despatched Mrs. Manley and both the Brownings.”

“True! What was Miss Browning saying to you?”

“Oh!” replied Constance, “she only asked me the price of my gown.”

“Did you tell her?”

“I could not. I remembered what it was a yard, but I had not time to add it up.”

Mr. Forde, who had sat by silently, laughed; Constance turned round, and seeing a person whom she did not know, turned back again to her friend.

“I will tell you where you may borrow

a Holinshed," said she, "if you still wish to read the account of the real de Lacey, Scott's Constable of Chester."

"Yes, I know. I wish it of all things."

"I asked papa and he said Mr. Brown-  
ing had one—a real old edition."

"I wonder how he came by it;" said Isabel. "I shall borrow it and make him leave it to me in his will. And talking of wills, I hear that your old uncle has been to visit you."

"Talking of rheumatism or wrinkles," said Constance laughing, "but wills are the last things I should talk of in connexion with uncle Thornton. His last will and testament has been declared very plainly a long time."

"A wicked will," said Isabel, "if it is to prevent you from receiving a handsome share of the old man's property."

"I have not earned it," replied Constance smiling.

"Are the ladies about here musical?" asked Mr. Forde of Miss Hernshaw.

“Yes, very!” replied Isabel.

“And you?”

“Of course. I do all in my power to promote the discord. I wish you could see yourself, my dear Constance, whenever music is mentioned; you always make a face like a person afflicted with toothache.”

“Do I?” said Constance, turning round to the looking-glass.

“Do you not like music?” asked Mr. Forde.

“Some music, and sometimes,” said Constance; “but I don’t know a greater penance than to be obliged to play when one is not in the humour for it.”

“You will never be a woman of the world,” said Isabel; “you let all your moods be seen.”

“No, never!” returned Constance very contentedly.

Music began; a whist party was forming—there were more than enough players, and another table was to be made up;

then, of course, one more player was wanted.

"Do have pity on them, Constance," said Isabel.

"You know that I cannot play," she replied.

"But learn, then. They always volunteer to teach a recruit."

"Oh, no! I have a horror of cards."

"But what is your objection?"

"I can hardly explain it. You know Kean said he never felt degraded except when he had on his Harlequin's jacket. Now I have just that feeling with a pack of cards in my hand."

"The fact is, you think them too trifling."

"That cannot be," said Constance laughing, "for I am very fond of playing at dominoes."

Mr. Forde went to the hostess and procured a box of dominoes. He brought them to Constance and challenged her to play.

She took Miss Hernshaw into her counsels, and opposed Mr. Forde. The game was only an excuse for a great deal of lively conversation. In the midst of some laughable description which Mr. Forde was giving them of Anglo-Neapolitan society of the second class, Miss Hernshaw caught her mother's eye fixed on her's—a slight sign passed between them.

“Ah !” said she rising, “mamma wants me to fasten that troublesome bracelet of her's ; the Venice clasp, Constance, which no one can manage but myself. You must finish without my assistance.”

“I think I shall not finish at all,” said Constance as her friend left her ; “I have nothing but bad numbers left.”

“But is it not very cruel in you to give me no chance of victory ?” asked Mr. Forde.

Constance laughed, and began mixing the dominoes.

They then fell into a conversation upon the antiquity of games, and from that to

the fine fragment of Greek boys at the British Museum, quarrelling over the game of knuckle-bones.

“Are you not talking of something very learned?” asked Miss Dyce, who now joined them.

“Profoundly so!” replied Mr. Forde.

“I thought I heard something about the Greeks. Are you a Philo-Hellenist, Mr. Forde?” asked the lady.

Constance surrendered her seat to Miss Dyce, and went in search of her mother.

Mrs. D'Oyley was talking to Lady Hernshaw; Miss Hernshaw was at the piano with Mr. Dyce and two or three other gentlemen surrounding her.

“My dearest Constance,” said her Ladyship, “would you be so very kind as to remind my foolish Isabel that she is singing a great deal too much this evening. She should recollect Dr. Grove's injunctions about her chest.”

Constance went directly; not that she supposed Lady Hernshaw to be anxious

about her daughter's health, but she knew well enough it was that lady's manner of dismissing a troublesome listener.

Isabel left off in the middle of a song, but she complied with the entreaties of the gentlemen that she would remain at the piano, and began playing a fantasia by Hertz. Meantime, Constance sat down alone, in order that she might listen to the music. She was presently joined by Mr. Forde, who complained of her unkindness in making her escape from him when he was particularly in want of her assistance.

"But for what?" asked Constance.

"To defend these Turks. I have defended the Greek cause so often that I took up the Turkish side by way of variety, and of course had very little to say for it."

"And I am sure I would have given you no assistance," said Constance. "But have you ever studied the law, that you are ready to plead both sides of a cause?"

"No," said Mr. Forde; "I have the real misfortune to be without a profession."

Constance thought it a misfortune too, but she said nothing.

"But I sought you from a very interested motive," continued her companion. "I have been hearing the wildest story imaginable; the history of a Lord Somebody, who lives the life of a recluse in this neighbourhood; turns night into day, and performs such wonders!"

"Oh! you mean Lord Bevis," said Constance. "Yes, it is generally believed that he is deformed, for he is never seen. He literally does turn night into day; rises in the evening and goes to bed at dawn; and rides out like other people when every body else is fast asleep."

"So I have just heard. But I am told that I might hear a great many more particulars of this curious being if you chose to be communicative."

"You think so because papa visits him



from time to time. His father, you know, gave papa the living. Do own now that you are quite as anxious to 'pluck out the heart of my mystery,' though you are a man, as any woman that ever lived."

"Then, will you tell me all you know of Lord Bevis?"

"I will, provided you confess."

"Well, then, *confiteor*: now, what do you know?"

"Absolutely nothing," said Constance, her whole face radiant with laughter. "I am so sorry, but papa gives us no account of his visits."

"And are you so devoid of curiosity?"

"I really don't wish to know exactly how deformed Lord Bevis is. I imagine it is to an extent that injures his health, or he would never shut himself up as he does. Papa regrets it, I know. He thinks it incompatible with the duties of so rich a man; but he has some factotum, a trusty

servant who does wonders for him. I suppose he is religious, from his having papa to visit him ; but you see I have no certain information, it is all supposition."

" And you have never extorted from Mr. D'Oyley a full-length portrait of this man ?"

" No," said Constance ; " for I agree with papa that he is the last person who should infringe the intentions of his solitude ; if he secludes himself that he may conceal the accident of his birth, papa should be careful not to expose his secret ; but, indeed, I do not know that he is deformed, it may be eccentricity that leads him to live alone."

Mr. Forde said something about an excess of heroism.

" No, do oblige me," said Constance, " by believing that a little more is required to make a hero than the mere absence of an unfeeling curiosity."

" Still," Mr. Forde began—

" Still," said Constance, rising, " you

have half made up your mind to storm this poor man's castle and possess yourself by force of his secret."

"Are you going?" said Mr. Forde with an expression of regret, "I hope that when I do myself the honour of returning Mr. D'Oyley's visit, I shall not find you as inaccessible as Lord Bevis."

"I don't know," said Constance, gaily, "I am all over the village every morning."

"What, among the poor people?"

"Sometimes; I go about a great deal with papa."

Having made their adieux, Constance and her mother left the room, and on reaching the hall they found Mr. Forde had followed them down stairs.

"Why, you are not going to walk?" said he.

"Oh, yes we are!" said Constance, tying on her bonnet; "and you came down to hand us into a fine carriage with four prancing horses; and in that case, the rectory is so close, that the horses' heads

would be at home while we were stepping into the carriage here."

"But I hope you will allow me to walk home with you?" said Mr. Forde offering his arm to Mrs. D'Oyley. She assured him that there was not the slightest occasion, and so forth, but he insisted and gained his point. He offered his other arm to Constance, but she dropped behind, saying "that she wished to have the full benefit of the lantern which the little foot-boy was carrying." He could hear her keeping up a conversation with the boy as they went along.

"Lantern a little lower, Tim, I am looking out for the black-beetles."

"No fear of them, Miss, they are flown out a long time."

"So, Tim, you got quite safe to Lady Hernshaw's?"

"Yes, Miss."

"No robbers in that dark corner by the mill-stream?"

"Oh, no! Miss."

"That's well ; though I have no money in my pocket, have you ?"

"Yes, Miss," said Tim, looking stealthily round.

"Indeed ; any ghosts out to-night ?"

"No, Miss," said Tim, walking a little closer to his young mistress.

"You looked well under the great yew tree as you came along ?"

"I ran past it, Miss."

"Why was that ? Did you see anything white creeping along the churchyard ?"

"No, Miss," said Tim, flying to the door and relieving his mind by a furious application of the knocker.

Mrs. D'Oyley and Mr. Forde were standing on the steps laughing.

"I suppose you are laughing at me," said Constance ; "but Tim is a *protégé* of mine. I never let my brothers tease or frighten him, preferring to carry on that branch of his education myself. Do you know that you have come out without your hat ? Entirely a matter of taste ! only if you

were to take your death of cold, don't you think mamma and I should have some reason to reproach ourselves? Are you afraid of ghosts? I shall be very happy to lend you Tim back to Lady Hernshaw's;—good night."

"Well, Miss Constance," said Mrs. D'Oyley, smiling, as they were parting for the night; "I think you have been flirting this evening at a great rate."

"Was that flirting, mamma?" said Constance taking up her candle, "I did not know it was anything half so agreeable."

### CHAPTER III.

GLO'STER.—Vouchsafe to wear this ring.

ANNE.—To take is not to give.

RICHARD III.

It was just two days after the tea-party at Mrs. Manley's, that Constance and her mother were talking and working in the drawing-room at the rectory, when a letter came in for Constance and a small parcel for Mrs. D'Oyley.

“Why surely, that little square packet never came by the post?” said Constance.

“No, my dear, the postman brought it from the town as it was so small.”

“Very gracious of him! This is from Edgar; hopes we are well—particularly your cold: wants two pair of gloves and

a cake — asks if we have read the last number of Nicholas Nickleby ; and says it wants only five weeks to the holidays. There, mamma, did you ever see anything so like copper-plate as that boy's hand ?”

“ No, my dear, it is beautiful. But now for my letter which is from uncle Thornton. He apologizes to you for having stolen your scissors, and begs that you will accept in return the enclosed remembrance.”

“ Oh, mamma ! what a beautiful sealing. A sapphire ! I am sure I shall do no such thing. Accept a present of such value from a person I dislike ?”

“ A relation, Constance ! Oh, my dear, it would never do to refuse it.”

“ And then to have to write a letter of thanks,” said Constance in a mournful voice. “ I am sure I have a mind to ask for my scissors back again, and say I do not want his ring. I dare say it cost twenty guineas.”

“ A mere trifle to him, my dear ; and it is neither kind nor wise to reject his



friendly advances. He may be of use to your brothers if he lives."

"He might have been," said Constance, colouring, "if he had chosen to exert himself for Harry; the only favour, too, you ever asked."

"Well, my dear, that is past and gone, and Harry is with us instead of being in India, recollect that."

"Yes, preparing for a profession he dislikes—the church too! Mamma, I hate uncle Thornton!" said Constance starting from her chair and throwing the ring across the table.

"My dear, dear Constance," said Mrs. D'Oyley gently.

"I am sure, mamma," said Constance running up to her, "that I did not mean to say anything wicked; only if anything happen to Harry, if he ever turn out what we do not wish, I shall lay all the blame on Mr. Thornton. But I will keep the ring and write the letter, and do anything rather than vex you."

Mrs. D'Oyley kissed her affectionately, and Constance sat down to her desk.

“ There now ! ” she exclaimed as the bell rang. “ Somebody coming to call just as I had found out how to begin ! I forget now ! Something very brilliant driven out of my head ! But I will go into the dining-room, and leave you to entertain the company.”

So saying, she lifted her little desk in her arms, and was leaving the room when the servant threw open the door and announced Mr. Forde. Constance stood still, and turning her head round, smiled and lifted her eyebrows with a little comic expression of vexation. Mr. Forde having hastily spoken to Mrs. D'Oyley, came forward and relieved her of her burden.

“ Thank you,” said Constance. “ If it had been one of my neighbours I could have done no less than faint at being caught in the fact : but strangers are different.”

“ What fact ? ” asked Mr. Forde.

“ Making my escape when the bell rang,

to finish a letter, or rather begin one. What, have you been absent from England so long, that you forget that very common habit?—one I am sure you must have often indulged in; for men generally manage to escape morning visitors.”

“ You see I am not polite enough to hope that I may not detain you from your letters,” said Mr. Forde, “ simply because I hope no such thing.”

“ They are as well put off,” said Constance ; “ for I am in a very stupid frame of mind this morning, and willing to bestow my tediousness, ‘ an ’twere a thousand times more than ’tis,’ upon any one rather than my correspondent.”

“ Is it possible that Miss D'Oyley can ever be tedious ?”

“ You shall have proof,” said Constance. “ It is a very fine day.”

“ But it rained in the night,” said Mr. Forde.

“ True, the weather is very unsettled at this time of the year,” returned Constance.

“ The rain does a great deal of good,” remarked Mr. Forde.

“ Yes, to the turnips.”

“ But the hay will be spoiled.”

“ I am afraid so. Have you much hay ?”

“ I should have—”

“ If it was not for the bad weather.”

“ Exactly so.”

“ Now is not that a real English conversation ?” said Constance, laughing. “ Then come politics, then the choicest bit of scandal current, told of course with a very dejected face, and then good morning, and it is high time too.”

“ And this was what you were running away from just now.”

“ Yes. Don't you think I was fully justified in doing so ?”

“ I will allow it,” said Mr. Forde, “ as you did not carry your point.”

He then addressed himself to Mrs. D'Oyley ; but at every sentence she noticed, with some amusement, that he turned to

Constance as if anxious that she would join the conversation.

“ Do you know, Miss D'Oyley,” said he, at last, “ that I heard of you at Malta.”

“ Indeed ! something very good, I hope, to travel such a long way.”

“ I heard from a friend that Miss D'Oyley was so silent that it was impossible to make her speak.”

“ How many friends have you, Mr. Forde ?” asked Constance.

“ How many ? I could not count them, without—”

“ Ay, I understand ; you have so many that you have not one. Now I have one friend, and nobody need expect to have more in a whole life-time.”

“ And who is this friend ?”

“ Isabel Hernshaw.”

“ Friendship is out of fashion except with young ladies,” said Mr Forde.

“ Yes,” returned Constance, quickly, “ you need not tell me that every thing good is going out of fashion, except among

women. What are you laughing at? Friendship, or my defence of it?"

"Oh! pray give me a definition of friendship," said Mr. Forde.

"No; that would be shewing a blind man colours."

"But I really have a friend."

"Then you do not want a definition. What were we talking of? Something very interesting! Oh! about *me*! Your friend said I would not talk; but that must have been a long while ago when I was afflicted with a complaint called shyness; you may have heard of such a thing."

"Don't you give me credit for having often suffered from it?" asked Mr. Forde.

"No."

"I am overpowered with it at this moment. I am wishing very much to ask you to sing, and yet it is such a piece of presumption in the morning that I cannot muster courage."

"I never encourage presumption," said Constance gaily. "And there, in good

time, is a ring at the bell ! Some one else coming to interrupt me ! Oh, my letters !”

“ I was the first aggressor,” remarked Mr. Forde.

“ You don't look at all sorry for it,” said Constance.

“ How can I ?” he replied with much meaning.

Lady Hernshaw and her daughter were announced, and at the same time Mr. Forde took leave. Constance thought her Ladyship very supercilious in her manner towards him ; but then his father had been a merchant, and he himself derived a considerable part of his large income from some commercial house.

“ I did not know you were so intimate with Mr. Forde,” was the first thing Isabel said.

“ Nor are we,” said Constance ; “ this is his first visit.”

“ I thought he seemed on such very familiar terms,” said Isabel.

“ All the fault of his manner, I sup-

pose," replied Constance. " You see we did not shake hands."

" You never do with gentlemen, my dear Constance," said Isabel.

" How is Lord Bevis ?" asked Lady Hershaw in a voice of interest.

" In his usual health," said Mrs. D'Oyley. " Mr. D'Oyley was with him yesterday evening."

" What a pity, my dear Mrs. D'Oyley, that he persists in so strange a seclusion. Have you any idea whether there is any—"

Mrs. D'Oyley could not supply the blank.

" Any—madness in—"

" Not that I am aware of," replied Mrs. D'Oyley.

I will not say in what terms Lady Hershaw privately denounced Mrs. D'Oyley's want of communicativeness, but she changed the subject immediately.

" By the bye, my dear Mrs. D'Oyley, what a sad young man that Mr. Forde is. I took care not to be at home when he



returned Sir George's call. A whole family of children at Elmsforde, I understand ?

“ Oh ! his sister's children, Mrs. Langley's. I recollect Mr. D'Oyley mentioning them, and he said they were beautiful creatures,” replied Mrs. D'Oyley.

“ Cherubs, no doubt,” said Lady Hershaw, looking thunder at so decisive a check-mate to her new bit of scandal. “ Isabel, my dear, we have been paying quite a visitation to poor Mrs. D'Oyley. Constance, love, you must see about getting up your good looks again now that we have so many beaux in the neighbourhood.”

## CHAPTER IV.

The flowery May, who from her green lap throws  
The yellow cowslip and the pale primrose.

MILTON.

TIME passed on : May with its cold winds and dismal rainy days, which, however, did contrive by some means to bring out the trees in all the brilliant and tender verdure that seldom survives that month. The halcyon days, which our elder poets describe, steeping their verses in the fresh odours and the warm sunlight of May are now held to be poetical imaginings ; and by *poetical*, people mean *false* and not *true*, which is the real meaning, as it is the deep, exhaustless heart of poetry.

From time to time, indeed more frequently than was consistent with etiquette,

Mr. Forde found his way along the green lanes which led from his house to the rectory. At every visit he became more enchanted with the easy kindness, the singular integrity of character apparent in the disposition of Constance. For herself, she treated him with an ease so nearly approaching to unconcern as to be anything but encouraging: the most delightful footing for an acquaintance, but perplexing enough to a man who was as nearly as possible a lover !

It was the end of May. Edgar had been sent home a few weeks before the holidays with a troublesome cough, which a little careful home management had brought under ; and a fine warm morning had tempted him and Constance into the garden to set their own peculiar flower-beds thoroughly to rights. Edgar, soon tired of work, sat on the edge of the wheel-barrow talking ; Constance, more indefatigable, was tying up, and cutting, and planting, with great perseverance, not taking particular care,

when she had a handful of rubbish, to avoid throwing them on her brother, but letting him have an even chance with the wheelbarrow.

"These carnations, Edgar ; oh ! do get me a couple of those green sticks from the shelf in the green-house. Thank you ; these are the finest in the whole parish. Lady Hernshaw has nothing like them."

"Lady Hernshaw paints, doesn't she ?" said Edgar.

"Oh, ladies never paint !" said Constance making a very long face. "Do you think these slips of jessamine would grow?"

"Not at this time of year. Do you know, at our school, the boys had a feast the night before I came home, up in the bed-rooms."

"And you all got tipsy, I suppose ?"

"I believe you ; at least *I* did."

"So good for your cough that was—so like a gentleman too ? I heard of an old

man who had once been made tipsy at Eton, and who was so disgusted with himself, that as long as he lived he never touched a drop of wine again. That was a *man*, now !”

Edgar murmured some indistinct remark to the effect that that old gentleman must have been a simpleton, and then changed discourse.

“ Oh look, Constance !” he said, standing on tiptoe that he might see over the shrubs, “ what beautiful action that chestnut horse has. If that horse was but mine——”

“ You would break your neck at once, instead of keeping us in daily expectation of that lamentable catastrophe.”

“ Do you know who it is ?”

“ The rider is Mr. Forde ; I have never been introduced to the chestnut horse.”

“ What sort of a fellow is Mr. Forde ?”

“ You will see for yourself most likely. He is coming hither, I dare say.”

“ What is he coming for ?”

“Not to rob the hen-roost, nor inspect the locks that he may head a house-breaking party at night, nor to eat a certain ravenous boy’s share of luncheon, nor to—”

“Be quiet, Constance!”

“Well, I am quite tired now. I shall go in doors and leave you to make every thing neat before you follow me.”

She was just going up the steps when Mr. Forde, catching sight of her as he dismounted at the hall-door, came out to meet her. Edgar looked up at him and liking the fashion of his spurs and riding-whip, set him down for a very good fellow indeed.

“I am going in doors,” said Constance.

“So am I then,” replied Mr. Forde, turning back with her.

“Papa is in his study,” said Constance, pushing open the door as she passed on to the drawing-room.

Mr. Forde went in much against his will, and after a few minutes’ conversation

with Mr. D'Oyley, rejoined the ladies in the drawing-room. Constance was making up a parcel for Edgar to carry over to her cousins, the Hiltons, who lived a few miles off.

"There, Edgar, that is the edition of Milton's smaller poems—to think of Mary never having read them—and that the first volume of the Huguenot. Now, if you drop these books—"

"Oh, no fear of that, Constance."

"You naughty little boy, look at your gloves. Give them to me—what disgraceful holes!"

"Oh! I can't wait!"

"Can't wait, ungrateful little creature!" said Constance, sewing very fast. "Do you think you are going to uncle Hilton's like a workhouse boy in these rags? Take your hat off, and sit down."

Mr. Forde was talking to Mrs. D'Oyley.

"And I wonder," said Constance as she fastened off her thread, "who it was that I heard this morning coaxing Tim to sing a

very doleful ballad while he was cleaning his knives, and then laughing at him?"

Edgar smiled and coloured.

"All I hope is that you rewarded Tim handsomely for his exertions. Now, in the first place," said Constance, holding back the mended gloves, "you are to bring me an answer—"

"Yes, I know."

"You are not to break the pony's knees; if you do, papa may forgive you, but I never can."

"I am not going to."

"Grammatical! Next—"

"Oh! Constance, I want to be off!"

"I know you do. Pay great attention to that steep bit of lane near Hillsted Church, and don't take him through the mill-stream coming back. There!"

"Thank you, dear," said Edgar, seizing his gloves and running out of the room.

"On my word," said Constance turning to Mr. Forde, "you are always laughing at me."



"If you will be so amusing," he replied, "I cannot help it."

"I hope then that you will be amusing in your turn," said Constance.

"If you would give me my cue," said he; "I only wish to know how to amuse you. Do you like scandal?"

"Not much," said Constance.

"Politics?"

"Not at all."

"What do you read chiefly?"

"Any thing that interests me. I was reading this morning a little Italian work, *Il duca d'Atene*."

"Do you like Italian?"

"Very well. But oh! how I wish that one could be mesmerised into a knowledge of German! I wish so earnestly to read Schiller."

"There are some good translations of German plays in the old numbers of *Blackwood's—the Horæ Germanicæ*."

"But I never like poetry translated; so

much of the pathos depends on the cadence."

"Yes," said Mr. Forde, "I think a translated poem bears the same relation to the original, that a print does to a picture; the colour is wanting, but the intention of the author is preserved."

"Just look here," said Constance pointing to the table: "that boy has left the books after all."

"Then let me have the pleasure of taking them over for you," said Mr. Forde.

"Not for the world. The books are of no consequence. It only shews what boys are," returned Constance.

"I wish you would let me ride over with them; you do not know how much I like to be useful."

"But I could not flatter you by saying you would be useful in the present case. I shall see Mary in a day or two."

"Still there is a note—"

“If Edgar has any wits left, he will remember that it was only to ask advice concerning the little insects on the greenhouse plants.”

“I have a remedy everybody has,” said Mr. Forde; “but really you will find tobacco-smoke very efficacious.”

“Thank you,” said Constance. “The next thing is to find a smoker! Mamma, shall we send for all the old men from the almshouse, and seat them in full divan with a pipe a-piece?”

Mrs. D'Oyley called Constance a giddy girl, and offered to shew Mr. Forde the greenhouse and the suffering plants, her invalids as Constance termed them. Mr. Forde told them the best way of fumi-gating, and then paused to admire the nice appearance of the plants.

“I am taking every word you say as a compliment,” said Constance; “for it is literally my work. I have no gardeners and sub-gardeners toiling while I take the praise.”

"I don't believe you ever could take praise you had not earned," said Mr. Forde earnestly.

"Ah!" said she, "do you study character?"

"If I did," thought Mr. Forde, "your's would baffle me."

It was not only that she did not seek admiration, but she really and gravely believed herself incapable of exciting it. He looked at her as she stood with the sun shining across her rich hair, the delicate bloom on her cheek heightened by talking, her long eyelashes cast down as she arranged some bending flower, unconsciously, for her thoughts were otherwise employed. He marked that tremulous, half-smiling movement of the lips, so surely indicative of extreme sensibility. He stood in perfect silence for some time, and wondered (it is a fancy sometimes with those who love) how she would move, what she would say or do next. At last Constance, starting a little, drew her watch from her waist-

band and glancing at it, held it smilingly to Mr. Forde.

“Is it possible?” he exclaimed.

“Very easily possible,” said she; “I have an engagement this afternoon with a poor woman; and you, I dare say, are engaged with a much finer one somewhere or other.”

“I have, indeed, an annoying engagement to dinner some ten miles off,” he said.

“Well, then, I pity you; I can do no more,” she replied.

“If you would give me a flower to wear, I should be more than consoled,” said he.

He spoke as if half in jest.

“Well, I never met with such unscrupulous begging!” exclaimed Constance, “unprincipled, I may say! What! do you pay no more respect to your own fine conservatories than to come hither and ask for flowers? I am shocked at you.”

Mr. Forde began to stammer, but she shook her head and passed him into the drawing-room.

"I am driven away," he said to Mrs. D'Oyley as he entered.

"I am sure I hope not," said she politely.

"I will tell you my only excuse for making such unreasonable calls," said Mr. Forde turning to Constance, "I meet you so seldom anywhere."

Constance did not say that she was so attached to home that she could scarcely bear to leave it, although that was more true in her case than in most others; she replied frankly:

"I know it: we are not rich enough to keep much company, so we go out but little in return; you understand?"

Mr. D'Oyley came into the drawing-room soon after Mr. Forde had taken his leave, and he and Constance chanced to be alone there.

"My dear," he said after a pause.

"Yes, papa," returned Constance.

"I think Mr. Forde seems to be coming very often to our house."

"So I think, papa," replied Constance;

There was a long silence ; at last she said :

“ *Too* often, do you think, papa ?”

“ That depends very much upon yourself, my dear ;” said her father. “ I should be glad that you attached no meaning to his visits.”

“ Indeed, papa, I do not,” said Constance blushing, “ however, I have neither beauty nor money to attract him. I look on him merely as an agreeable acquaintance.”

She *thought* so.

## CHAPTER V.

Look you—I have fitted  
A husband for you, noble and deserving :  
No shrinking back !

THE LADY'S TRIAL.

Los ojos cuya lumbre bien pudiera  
Tornar clara la noche tenebrosa,  
Y escurecer el sol à mediadía  
Me convirtiéron luego en otra cosa.

GARCILASO DE LA VEGA.

I HAVE said that Lady Hernshaw was a very clever woman, and it may readily be supposed that this excellence was peculiarly displayed in the management of and for her beautiful daughter. Her instructions had made Isabel at eighteen an elegant woman : she conversed well, wrote well, dressed well, feigned well—the most needful lesson



of all ; and had as nearly as possible suppressed all those emotions which are most natural and becoming to a young mind. Lady Hernshaw knew that genuine impulses, like real tears on the stage, are not half so graceful, and seldom as effective as those which are assumed in nice proportion to the object required.

Her reasons for so doing were common and easily divined ; but her training was admirable. Her daughter must make a great match. To accomplish this, she was gracefully educated ; not loaded with erudition, but polished and well-informed on topics of light literature. She was not indulged in habits of female intimacy, she had no young friends with cross-barred correspondence to engross her fancy and encourage her in dreams of romantic attachments. She was made false ; how else could she be brought to pledge her faith to any man her mother might select ? She was heartless ; or her whole nature, the very pulses of her life, would revolt from a marriage without affection. The only young

person with whom she was at all acquainted was Constance D'Oyley. There was a reason for Lady Hernshaw permitting her daughter to cultivate the society of the D'Oyleys, independently of the very obvious one that Constance was not attractive to the other sex; should she chance to marry, Lady Hernshaw knew that she would directly be pronounced the lovely Mrs. So-and-so, but as a single woman she did not happen to excite any general admiration. But Lady Hernshaw in common with many other *clever* people, entertained, where her personal interest was concerned, views whose wildness would startle your merely *sensible* woman.

She had for years past fixed upon Lord Bevis as the husband of her daughter, and Mr. D'Oyley was the only person who had access to that eccentric individual. She knew that in the world of London there are a great many more handsome girls than there are lords to marry them; and she knew also that although Sir George Hern-

shaw had made a great deal of money in speculations, he had lost a great deal too, and that Isabel had nothing but her beauty to advance her in life. She knew nothing, it is true, of the person of Lord Bevis, but she was very well acquainted with the extent of his property, and she was satisfied that she could secure nothing more advantageous for her daughter than his Lordship's hand. And connected with the D'Oyleys was some vague hope just amounting to the absence of despair, that Lord Bevis might be induced to relax the strictness of his seclusion in their favour, and that Isabel, through her intimacy with them, might at some time or other be thrown in his way.

But fortune, which sometimes takes a pleasure in frustrating the most laudable efforts had hitherto afforded no assistance to her schemes ; still perseverance was a virtue which Lady Hernshaw possessed in an eminent degree, and we shall see that in due time she reaped her reward.

“ What a stupid evening we have passed,

my dear Isabel," said Lady Hernshaw, settling herself in her corner of the carriage as they rolled home from a quadrille party held at the house of a friend, "I am very glad your father did not accompany us."

"Mrs. Allingham's parties are always so dull," returned her daughter; "such a very bad style of young men one always meets there!"

"Young Mr. Forde is decidedly handsome," said Lady Hernshaw; "although it is as well for me to remark, *en passant*, that he is quite out of your way."

"Do you think him handsome?" said Miss Hernshaw, languidly.

"Decidedly. And really he has a very good manner. If he were but a marquis, Isabel!"

Miss Hernshaw was pulling her bouquet to pieces in silence; perhaps it was well that the darkness concealed her blushes.

"You talked a great deal to him," said her Ladyship.

“ Oh ! he is very amusing,” replied Isabel carelessly.

“ Be guarded,” returned her mother, “ it is not always safe to amuse oneself at the expense of a man’s feelings. *The thing gets about* : now that silly Clifton, who—”

“ Oh, worse than that !” cried Isabel. “ Poor Mr. Bohun ! I cannot bear to think of that ; but it was not my fault.”

“ Whose fault then ?” exclaimed Lady Hernshaw, whose temper was very quickly roused ; “ a man pays his addresses to a young girl which are not acceptable to her parents, and they are declined ; such things I hope are not of very rare occurrence. Let me hear no farther allusion to that subject.”

Isabel, who certainly did not number violence of temper among her faults, sighed and was silent ; and Lady Hernshaw after indulging in a short monologue concerning the toils of mothers, and the ingratitude of daughters, followed her example and soon after fell into a doze. She was startled

out of it by a flash of lightning which lit the whole surrounding landscape into day, and revealed for a moment the pale face of her daughter, who was sitting erect and motionless with the tears still standing on her beautiful cheek. A peal of thunder followed that seemed to shake the earth—then another flash, with a crash close upon it, and then a sudden torrent of enormous hail-stones. The horses stood still cowering beneath the storm.

“ Oh, how terrible !” said Isabel covering her eyes.

“ It is, indeed—another—what a peal ! No animals will bear this. Is there no house near ?”

“ None,” said Isabel, as the whole length of road was again illuminated with terrible distinctness ; “ I know where we are.”

“ Some way from home, are we not ?”

“ Oh, yes ! three miles nearly.”

“ What can we do ?”

The servant came round to the carriage

door at the same moment to repeat the question.

“ It is better to wait a little, Henry, no horses can face this storm ; but are we near any trees ? ”

“ Not *very* near, my Lady ; but we are just on the brow of the hill. ”

“ That's bad, is it not ? ”

“ Yes, my Lady. Barton says a man was struck last year by lightning hereabouts, and two sheep the year before. ”

Servants always do remember these kind things just at the right time. Just then a horseman followed by another dashed past the carriage at full gallop. At the same instant of time, a blaze of fearful brilliancy enveloped earth and sky in one sheet of flame, while a burst of thunder, more awful than any of the others, rolled long and loud over head. The horse of the foremost rider fell headlong to the ground, and of course the horseman was precipitated with him. For some moments the inmates of the carriage were too much engrossed by

their own plunging horses to inquire the fate of the rider ; but soon after a voice at a little distance was heard to cry out :

“ A light, a light, for God’s sake ! My Lord is killed ! ”

“ It is Lord Bevis,” cried Lady Hernshaw. “ Henry, go directly—take one of the carriage lamps.”

Now Lady Hernshaw was a very kind-hearted woman ; she would give her daughter deliberately into the hands of a fool or a profligate, provided he were of sufficient quality ; but any person in distress was sure to command her warmest assistance, particularly if his suffering took place immediately under her own eye. She leaned from the window and tried to listen to the low muttered conversation that the men were holding a few paces in advance of the carriage. At last she called her servant to her.

“ What is the matter, Henry ? Anything very serious ? ”



"The gentleman seems stunned, my Lady."

"Had he not better be brought into the carriage? The storm seems abating. We can more easily procure assistance for him at home."

"I'll see, my Lady."

Another low consultation with the other servant ensued, after which he approached the carriage.

"I am sorry, madam," he said, in a manner superior to that of an ordinary servant, "to be compelled to decline your obliging offer, it is very much against my inclination; but my Lord is so averse to seeing any strangers, even for an instant, that I have no alternative."

"But surely," said Lady Hernshaw eagerly, "this is no time for scruples. I only propose that he should share our carriage as far as my house; it is then at his disposal to convey him home."

The man replied that if possible he would persuade his Lord to accept her kindness, and went back to his master.

In a few moments he returned with Lord Bevis leaning on his arm, who, lifting his hat to the eager inquiries of Lady Hernshaw, said in a very low confused manner, that he was sufficiently recovered to proceed, and could not possibly intrude himself upon her party.

Lady Hernshaw grasping her daughter's arm, whispered in her ear: "Ask him—you !"

Isabel knew by the trembling of her mother's hand that she was very much excited. This husband hunting after all is something like field sports—angling or shooting—there's a little enlivening uncertainty about it at all times.

"Pray, pray come in," said Isabel leaning forwards, and speaking in the sweetest tones of her delightful voice. "Indeed, after such a terrible fall, you do very wrong to expose yourself to this weather ; it is beginning to rain again."

The dim light of the lamp fell on her exquisite figure and snowy arms, and sha-

dowed forth her faultless features and lustrous eyes, and her glittering light auburn hair folded back beneath a coronal of blush roses. Before she had finished her sentence, Lord Bevis had his foot on the step and in another moment he had taken his place in the carriage. Anxiously as Lady Hernshaw scanned him, she could distinguish nothing of his figure beneath the heavy folds of his cloak. As he passed through the streak of lamplight, she discerned that his face was of a ghastly paleness ; but then people do not usually look their very best after a heavy fall. She was certain he would do very well for Isabel. His defects of person could not be so very bad—she perceived nothing of them—and besides, they did not diminish his estates by a single acre. No encounter could be more fortunate. Lady Hernshaw was no novice ; she did not endeavour to ingratiate herself with her prize by a torrent of assiduous questions ; her object was to put him at his ease with them by degrees.

“ You are better now, dearest,” said she pressing her daughter’s hand. “ You were sadly frightened and no wonder ; it was a dreadful storm.”

“ *Were* you frightened ?” said Lord Bevis in the same low voice. “ True, you have so much at stake—so much beauty. Now I—I scarcely know what fear is.”

“ Ah !” thought Lady Hernshaw, he has nothing of the tone of good society ; talks of his feelings and all that sort of thing. “ You know, my Lord,” she said, “ we women claim the privilege of cowardice without disgrace, and this poor girl, indeed, made large use of her right : she almost fainted.”

“ Most natural !” said Lord Bevis. “ And yet in storm or calm, the same heaven hangs over all !”

“ Oh dear, how awkward !” thought her Ladyship. “ I do believe the man is religious ; and then, indeed, there is no knowing. However, we must make the best of it ;” and she directly remembered, and

said, something about men being likened to worms or grass.

“ At all times,” he replied ; “ but it is only when they are measured by circumstances that they feel a truth too common to be well understood.”

“ Oh, this is dreadful !” thought Lady Hernshaw. “ But all his talking cannot melt down his property, that is my comfort !”

How desperately vulgar guilt is, and how individual ! How many noble peasants, and coarsely thinking ladies in velvet gowns does experience bring before us !

“ I do hope we are not driving too fast for you,” said Isabel.

“ Not at all, I thank you,” replied Lord Bevis.

“ Do you feel better ?” she asked timidly.

“ Quite, quite well,” he returned.

The carriage stopped. Lord Bevis got out and offered the ladies his hand, mechanically as it seemed ; where he learned that piece of civilization, Lady Hernshaw

could not conjecture. He followed them into the hall like one in a dream, and stood gazing upon Isabel with such deep abstraction as not to be aware that Lady Hershaw was speaking to him, until she had repeated her question several times.

“ Will you not allow me to send for our medical man ? ”

“ On no account. With your permission I will avail myself of your carriage immediately to take me home.”

“ Pray be persuaded to take some refreshment.”

“ Nothing, thank you—I am going home to dinner.”

He forgot it was anything remarkable to dine at two o'clock in the morning. Isabel who acted beneath her mother's eye, as birds are said to do beneath the gaze of the rattlesnake, now approached him.

“ Do you know,” said she, with her brilliant smile which lit her face into the likeness of a seraph's, all love and wisdom, “ do you know we have half a right to keep you here, now we have you ; because, if

any harm should happen from your not taking advice, we should feel ourselves very much to blame."

Those winning tones fell like dew upon the ear of the solitary man. He seemed at first scarcely able to reply ; then coming up to her and taking her hand as he might have touched a queen's, he said :

" An hour ago I should have thought an adventure so foreign to my habits, a most vexatious occurrence ; now, with far more cause for lasting regret, I esteem myself beyond expression happy."

Isabel not exactly applying his words, stood silent, with a sweet smile on her lips, and it was not until he had left the house, that she turned and met her mother's look of triumph.

" Good girl," she said, " he's yours. You shall be Lady Bevis."

" I ?" said poor Isabel trembling with fear and wonder.

" You doubt it ?" said her Ladyship as the carriage rolled from the door. " There goes your husband, Isabel."

## CHAPTER VI.

Oh ! deal magnanimously with me, nor  
What 'tis not wrong to feel, when thou dost feel it,  
Believe 'tis wrong to speak !—Frankly ! couldst love me ?

WOMAN'S WIT.

*Conceit*, more rich in matter than in words.

SHAKSPEARE.

“ YES, it is very fine, very fine indeed, to sit with your legs out of the window, and carve your name on the window-seat with my pen-knife instead of doing your lesson,” exclaimed Constance. “ Come Edgar, now, *tirer* !”

“ *Tirer*, tired, at least I am,” said Edgar, yawning.

“ Well, I thought nobody could ever tire of these memoirs of Madame de la Rochejaquelin.”

“ Oh, hang French.”



“ Yes, hang everything except cricket-balls and stupid boys ; now do attend, there’s a good boy.”

“ I know why you’re in such a hurry,” said Edgar, mischievously ; “ you think Mr. Forde will be here soon.”

Constance did the worst thing she could possibly do—she ran out of the room. Edgar looked after her with an appearance of great glee, and then quietly slid down from the window into the garden.

Some time after, as Constance was hunting for violets along the sunny bank of their meadow, her brother came up to her bursting with laughter, and told her that his mamma had sent him to find her, for that somebody was in the drawing-room and she must guess who it was.

“ Uncle Thornton ?”

“ No.”

“ Uncle Hilton ?”

“ No ; that’s nearer though.”

“ Well then, Eustace Hilton. Mary told

me he was returned from Malta, and more conceited than ever."

"Yes, the regiment's come back, and such a quiz as he looks; and there's Mr. Forde and another man in the drawing-room." And, pursued Edgar as Constance took off her bonnet in the hall, "your hair is all rough; the comb will fall out behind, in a minute."

Constance laughing, secured her comb, but protested against going upstairs to beautify herself. With her colour a little heightened, and the heavy curls of her beautiful hair in a picturesque state of disarray, she entered the room, and found two strange-looking gentlemen in undress uniform, one of whom she apprehended to be her cousin. Eustace was conversing with her mother, Mr. Forde with the other stranger.

"Constance, do you not recollect your cousin Eustace?" said Mrs. D'Oyley.

"Yes, mamma, that's Eustace," said

she, recognising him by a slight bow, and just touching the fingers which he languidly held out to her ; “ I don't think he is much grown—are you, Eustace? You ought to know, because they measure you, don't they, like a horse, when you go into the army? Oh, no thank you,” said she to the other gentleman who was placing a chair for her, “ I am looking about for my own particular chair, I cannot talk in any other.”

“ Here it is,” said Mr. Forde.

“ Oh, thank you !” returned Constance. “ What is that little book on the table? You know a book-worm detects a new book as readily as a fine lady a hat from Herbault.”

“ Only Goethe's Faust, which I thought you might like to look at.”

“ Translated, I hope ;” said Constance.

“ Yes, Lord Leveson Gower's translation.”

“ Eustace,” said she, raising her voice a little, “ have you ever read the Faust?”

"I haven't the least idea what it is," he drawled.

"The history of a famous race-horse ; he won, I can't tell how many cups at Doncaster."

"Really, I never heard of him."

"Well then, you must be a dunce, you always were at school ; I remember you used to tell us how they beat you. By the by, do they pursue the same system with you now ? No—what a pity !"

Every body laughed : Eustace in his usual tone contrived to articulate, "What an idea !"

"No, don't, Eustace," said Constance ; "don't talk about ideas, because that sets people reflecting whether we all have such things or not, which is not always advantageous."

Mr. D'Oyley now came into the room, Eustace presented his friend to him as Captain——, the name was inaudible.

"I don't know," said Constance looking attentively at the Faust, "I really don't

know if it is that fur he wears over his mouth by way of moustaches, but I cannot make out one word in three that he utters."

Mr. Forde supplied the name of the Captain—Bohun. He said he had met him at Malta, to which place he had made a pilgrimage from Naples in search of some pictures of Caravaggio's, painted when that extraordinary man was among the Knights of Malta.

Constance found her little book of Retzsch's etchings, and began comparing them with the poem. Mr. Forde, leaning over her chair, pointed out the lines which referred to the different plates. She assured him that these outlines would bear the closest inspection even through a magnifying glass; and she asked Edgar where that burning-glass was with which he was so kindly trying to light her kitten's whiskers the other morning.

The quiet-looking Captain Bohun took it from a table near which he was sitting and gave it to her. It then struck her that

she had seen him before ; where she could not recollect. Eustace at the same moment rose, and he and his friend took leave together.

“ Oh ! I am so glad,” said Constance, “ I have two and twenty questions to ask papa ; first about old nurse Whitmore, is she better ?”

“ Much better, my dear.”

“ Will she want any more arrow-root ?”

“ Why that you had better ask her to-morrow. But, my little girl, if you mean to smooth your hair before dinner, it is almost time you set about it.”

“ Yes, papa, but—”

“ Mr. D'Oyley has been kind enough to ask me to dinner,” said Mr. Forde seeing her look towards him.

“ Oh, dear, how dull for you !” exclaimed Constance. “ No, don't answer. I know I have said a very stupid thing, but I really did not mean to—”

She left the room while she was speaking, and Mr. Forde was obliged to wait

until she returned before he could contradict her assertion.

“ Did you ever read the Sketches of Young Gentlemen ?” asked Constance as they stood by the window before dinner ; “ because Eustace is an exact resemblance of one of those military young gentlemen who figure on the frontispiece.”

“ I see, Miss D'Oyley,” said Mr. Forde, “ that there is one fault to which you give no quarter.”

“ You are right—affectation ; especially in my own relations.”

“ But what do you think of your cousin's friend, Captain Bohun ? He was the gentleman who first told me of your silent propensities.”

“ Then I *have* seen him before ; I thought so. Ah ! I recollect, at Lady Hernshaw's, more than two years ago.”

“ Yes. He was a great admirer of Miss Hernshaw's ; was he not ?”

“ Very great ; and—”

Constance stopped ; for the history was

not one which could be told with great credit to her friend.

“ Oh ! I know the story,” said Mr. Forde. “ His father’s rich brother, Sir Guy Bohun was then unmarried, and Miss Hernshaw accepted him—of course the old people made it a condition that he should go abroad for a couple of years ; he joined his regiment at Malta, and soon after, Sir Guy, contrary to all expectation, married ; upon which Miss Hernshaw found some pretext for dismissing her lover.”

“ Not Isabel, indeed,” said Constance eagerly ; “ she had no voice in the matter—do believe it !”

“ I will,” said he, “ for she is your friend.”

Something in his manner made Constance feel not quite at her ease ; she went to the table and took up her work, wondering why dinner was not announced.

“ Don’t you recollect,” said Mr. Forde taking a chair by her side, “ how you escaped from me the first time we met?



I don't mean that you should do so again."

Constance had made a false stitch in her netting, and she could not undo it while he was looking at her so ; she went back to the window.

" 'This tiresome silk !' " said she by way of answer. She tangled it, and then laughed almost hysterically.

" Nothing could put you out of temper," said Mr. Forde.

" Oh, ask Edgar ! " cried Constance looking up in her fresh candid manner, " he will tell you a different tale."

" Do you think I could believe him rather than my own heart ? " he asked.

An hour ago she would have been astonished at such a question ; then, she almost expected it—so much difference is made by a few words and looks. Her fingers trembled as she still sought to disengage the silks, and she had nothing to say, and silence was so awkward, and Mr. Forde was as awkward as herself, trembling as

much, and colouring nearly as much. She looked straight out of the window, and her eyes began to grow dim with tears ; he endeavoured gently to draw her netting out of her hand, and begged that she would not annoy herself with it. She dropped the work, and there was her hand at liberty ; he took possession of it and began :

“ If I dared to interpret—could I venture to hope that—”

She was silent. In another moment he had obtained a trembling permission to refer his hopes to her father. Mr. and Mrs. D'Oyley came in ; they had not been absent ten minutes ; and in that time what things had occurred ! At dinner she was absent and confused. Edgar laughed at her ; even her father looked surprised. She was so glad when her mamma rose from table ; she thought they must have been sitting a long while, and yet when they went into the drawing-room, there were the Miss Brownings come to drink tea, and they were worse than Edgar, they stared at her

so much. When first they heard Mr. Forde was dining there, they both looked very cross, but a little while after they thought it would be better policy to put on a smile, and teaze Constance a little about it.

“People will talk, you know, dear,” said Miss Browning seating herself at a fine portfolio of prints; “it’s foolish and disagreeable, particularly when a man is the subject.”

Constance blushing painfully, said “it was *very* foolish, and hoped her visitor had light enough.”

“Quite,” said Miss Browning tossing over a few prints; “and then when nothing comes of it, it makes a person so *very* awkward.”

“I dare say,” returned Constance, stooping to search for some engraving; which, she did not know.

“I do feel for you, dear,” pursued the lady.

Constance looked all wonder.

“I would’nt mind though, love; when

people talk of such very improbable things, because they can't be generally believed."

The door opened, and Mr. D'Oyley entered alone.

"Where is Mr. Forde?" asked Mrs. D'Oyley.

"He is gone home;" replied Mr. D'Oyley quietly.

"What!" said Miss Browning, aside, "could not your attractions induce him to remain to tea?"

"So it seems;" she returned, growing very pale.

She would have given very much to know what had passed between Mr. Forde and her father during her absence. However, she was obliged to make the tea, and she found it required a great deal of close attention to prevent her putting the cream into the sugar basin, or leaving out the item, tea, altogether, especially as she was closely watching her papa's face all the time she was pouring it out. He seemed very cheerful, and was

joking and laughing with the younger Miss Browning concerning the seven little dogs in which she indulged ; but Constance imagined his spirits were forced, and that he avoided looking at her, and several other little fancies, which so excited her, that by the time the Brownings took leave, she was just ready to burst into tears.

“ Well, Constance, my dear,” said her father approaching her.

“ Oh, papa !” she exclaimed, hiding her face on his shoulder.

“ What do you think, Margaret,” said Mr. D'Oyley, turning to his anxious wife, “ shall we dismiss Mr. Forde altogether ?”

“ Mr. Forde, my dear ?”

“ Even so : what say you, Constance ?”

Constance said nothing, but she transferred her arms from her father's to her mother's neck.

Mrs. D'Oyley after trying indistinctly to express her happiness at the prospect, melted into tears. Constance joined her. Mr. D'Oyley, holding her hand, was not

quite free himself from a similar imputation. As for Edgar, as soon as he learned the state of the case, he sat down on a footstool, and to use his own expression "blubbered" heartily.

These joyful occasions !

However in a few minutes they began to talk it over, and Mrs. D'Oyley confessed that Mr. Forde was always a favourite of her's, and she had thought, she had seen from the first how it would end.

"That first party ! Constance, my love."

"Yes, only think," said Constance, with tearful eyes ; "to admire me, to care for me, whom nobody ever thought about—in that way, I mean !"

"My dear, you are so young still—you have been so little seen," said Mrs. D'Oyley, jealous for her daughter's reputation.

"And then I have no fortune. I hope, papa, he knows that," said Constance.

"Clearly, my dear."

"And no expectations from uncle Thornton."

“ I told him that Mr. Thornton had already disposed of his property in favour of young Parker ; he said he was glad of the circumstance, with many flattering things which will come better from him than me.”

“ Oh, dear mamma !” said Constance looking up admiringly into her mother’s face.

Edgar, who had been for some time rubbing his eyes very hard with his handkerchief, and who felt, in consequence, quite calm and collected, now began to relate certain anecdotes of Mr. Forde’s groom—that he let him ride his master’s Arabian about the court while he was making a call—and that he had said Master Edgar ought to have cords and tops, and follow the hounds, for there was not a bit of fear in him—that he had promised the said Edgar a ferret—and that, in short, the groom was a very good fellow. However, as the groom had not just made a proposal, the party preferred talking of his master who had,

and they were in the midst of this occupation when little Tim brought in a note for Mr. D'Oyley.

“Read it, Constance, my dear,” said her father; “I am sorry to say my eyes fail me very much by candle-light.”

“You should have a stronger light, papa—a Cambridge lamp,” said Constance opening the note.

“No, my dear, I can scarcely bear the light of a candle near me.”

“Oh, dear papa, how curious; this note is from Lord Bevis—the first I ever saw of his—he begs you to see him early to-morrow morning, if possible.”

“Certainly. Edgar, give me my writing case; there, Constance, is that legible? I can hardly see.”

“My dear,” said Mrs. D'Oyley, “you should speak to Mr. Martyn about your eyes. I never heard you complain so much before.”

“Oh! it is nothing,” said Mr. D'Oyley; “I have always suffered more or less from



weakness. Give that to the servant, Tim."

"What did Tim look at you for so cunningly as he went out?" asked Constance.

"I know," said Edgar.

"Well, but I don't know," returned Constance.

"Why—then—I dare say there's a bird in my new trap."

"What shall you do with the bird? let it go?"

"I should think not," replied Edgar.

"Then you are a very cruel little boy. I shall not allow you to have a trap."

"There's papa talking to mamma about Mr. Forde," said Edgar; "you should go and hear what they are saying and leave my trap alone."

Constance turned her head, and Edgar went out of the room to learn if he had rightly interpreted Tim's last look.

## CHAPTER VII.

Oh ! can she pity me ?  
Of all the paths that lead to a woman's love,  
Pity's the straightest.

KNIGHT OF MALTA.

It was a still fresh morning, the unbroken dew lay all around like a sheet of silver, when Mr. D'Oyley passed along the winding shrubberies which skirted the upward road through Herne Park to the house. There was always a singular repose about this domain ; the squirrels ran boldly across the path, the hares crept lazily away as he advanced, and their light steps might be traced along the wet grass which lay sparkling beneath the early rays of the sun. The house stood on the brow of the hill,

on a lawn of smooth turf, with old fantastic trees around, and a view which extended far over the neighbouring country.

At the foot of the hill the river wound along, and below lay the fishing cottage, a little gothic toy, standing in a glade of beech trees reaching to the water's edge ; there were two or three children playing in the sunshine, and the mother watching them from the cottage porch ; all so distant and diminished from where D'Oyley stood, that it might seem a little bit out of fairy land.

The door was silently opened by an old-looking servant, and he stepped into a lofty hall supported by two rows of marble pillars. There were armorial bearings cut on the walls in stone, but no pictures ; only one exquisite statue of Hebe disgraced. He went through saloon, drawing-room, library, all stored with fine pictures, and entered a small writing-closet which looked not very unlike a lady's morning-room.

Gothic windows of painted glass opened into a beautiful flower-garden enclosed

from the park, beyond which the velvet grass rose gradually on either side into banks, skirted with trees and ornamented occasionally with statues and vases of white marble. Jessamines hung round the lattice, and flower-beds that bespoke the most careful culture lay without. The pictures in the room were all gems of art. An elaborate Battista, where hyacinths, and tulips, and roses with the dew on their leaves were heaped into a basket with all that glorious profusion which characterised that artist's productions, was opposed by a Roes-træten, in which a casket of chased silver, and a handful of coins, an old worm-eaten book of engravings left open, and an antique watch with its ponderous chain and seals between the leaves, gave one the idea that these relics had been laid on that very marble slab, and there preserved untouched until the present time.

There was also a small and beautiful painting of a virgin and child, valuable as a study of colour and composition, but still

more from the expression, the tremulous fear depicted in the mother's face which gives to the emotion of love its most intense and poetical attribute.

There was a table half covered with books, and a very luxurious easy chair pulled close to it. A volume of Clarendon lay open with a pair of gloves thrown down beside it, and close to the chair was a stand with a portfolio of magnificent engravings, principally from Vandyke's portraits of that eventful period. Mr. D'Oyley drew it towards him, and turned over the calm disdainful face of Capel, the picturesque gallantry of Falkland, the merry mischief of Buckingham, and the dark-browed loveliness of Henrietta Maria. He was searching for a portrait of the haughty Pembroke, when Lord Bevis entered.

His Lordship was so slightly deformed in person, that his rigid seclusion might have surprised those who are best acquainted with the wayward fancies common to people in his circumstances, and having been the result

of a fall in infancy, his countenance was free from that peculiar expression which in itself would betray the most artfully concealed deformity to an experienced eye.

He had passed a neglected and suffering childhood at an estate in Wales belonging to his father, uncheered save by the hurried annual visit of his noble and beautiful mother. He was a cripple and a second son, but the very causes that would have added warmth to the affection of a common parent froze its current in the heart of the lofty countess. Her eldest son was all that her fondest desire could paint : handsome, spirited, admired, and attached to her ; the younger was hanging on the margin of the grave, and that not in a sentimental attitude ; so she left him to complete his journey without her care or sympathy. She told her intimate friends that she thought it would be a great mercy if it would please Heaven to take poor Leonard, and certainly she offered no impediment to his departure. But the pure air of the

Welsh mountains brought him health ; his figure improved, he dismissed his doctors, and requested his mother to replace them with a tutor. This was a difficulty ; but Mr. D'Oyley, who held a small living in that neighbourhood from the late Lord Bevis, was petitioned by the countess to devote a few hours of his time to the instruction of her son. He readily acceded to her wish, although he found a task more arduous than he had in the least anticipated. His pupil was gifted with singular talents ; he had, almost unaided, made wonderful progress in several branches of learning ; but, although he accepted with eagerness the intelligent aid which Mr. D'Oyley afforded him in such pursuits, his haughty and embittered spirit rejected utterly every attempt on the part of his preceptor to win his confidence or to soften the gloom of his character.

It was a new and painful position for Mr. D'Oyley to feel that he was regarded with mistrust and dislike. However, time

and circumstances did their accustomed office ; his scholar learned to feel that there was one person who entertained a sincere and disinterested regard for his welfare—one whose religion was not merely a name, but a principle which directed his life—one whose kindness might be constitutional, but whose steadfastness of purpose was based on higher grounds. Then it was that Mr. D'Oyley was enabled to awake him to a sense of his own responsibilities—to point out the indissoluble links which exist between man and his fellow-creatures—to put in action the benevolence of a nature only too finely endowed with sensibilities. On one point alone he found him inexorable : he was determined on preserving his seclusion ; no arguments, no entreaties could prevail on him to go forth into the world. The calamity which could estrange a mother from her son, he said, was argument enough against his tempting the charities of mankind. Even when the premature death of his brother put him in possession of the



earldom, he remained unchanged. He transferred, indeed, his place of residence from Wales to Herne Park, but it was only to carry out a more total system of retirement than before. A habit of late hours, in which he had indulged from boyhood, had from year to year crept on to greater excess, until he might be said, with truth, to turn night into day. The death of the incumbent had installed Mr. D'Oyley in the living of C——, and placing him near his old pupil, had renewed the familiarity of their intercourse. And, therefore, he had wished to see him now to impart to him the strange adventure he had met with; to own that Isabel had made an impression on his mind which never could be effaced, and to entreat him to point out the means, which his solitary life denied him, of seeing her if possible from time to time, and pleading his own cause with all the ardour of strong truth.

Mr. D'Oyley might have found many women whom he would have thought more

worthy to share the heart of his friend ; but he knew that in such matters every man will select for himself ; he could not, however, refrain from telling Lord Bevis that he believed a worse, a falser system of education had never been pursued than that under which Miss Hernshaw had been trained.

“ And the natural beauty of her heart is still unimpaired,” exclaimed Lord Bevis ; “ it is in her face—legibly written by the hand of Heaven.”

“ I wish it may be so ;” said Mr. D'Oyley.

“ She looked so full of pity,” said Lord Bevis, “ that I have thought it possible to excite through her compassion a warmer feeling in her heart ; if this is an idle hope, tell me so ; it would be kinder than to let me still hope on.”

“ It is my belief,” said Mr. D'Oyley, “ that if you were to offer her your hand this day it would be accepted. But I pray you, for your own sake, to take time to

examine the character of this young lady before you venture on an act which will colour your whole future existence."

"It is too late for that," said Lord Bevis impatiently.

"Write, then," said Mr. D'Oyley, "and beg that Lady Hernshaw will give you permission to visit at her house."

He took Mr. D'Oyley's advice and wrote. Lady Hernshaw's reply was a masterpiece. She invited him warmly to her family circle; promised that he should be received alone, and hinted just perceptibly that her daughter had been interested by their short and singular meeting.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Shew me some way to 'scape these nuptials—do it !  
Some opening for avoidance or escape.

THE HUNCHBACK.

Sarà più dolce assai  
Il tuo destin del mio ;  
Tu il genio tuo potrai  
Meglio appagar di me.

METASTASIO.

ONE morning, after these events, Constance received a note from her friend Isabel, begging her in very urgent terms to call upon her in the course of the morning, and mentioning in a postscript that her mamma had gone to London for the day.

This latter piece of intelligence was rather welcome than otherwise to Constance, for Lady Hernshaw was possessed of a

somewhat uncertain temper, and her friends had no reason to complain of want of variety in her reception of them. So she obeyed her friend's summons with great alacrity, and was in Isabel's boudoir, even before her impatience could have believed it possible.

"Oh, dearest Constance!" said Isabel, embracing her friend, "I am so very glad to see you; sit down close to me, I want your advice."

"Well then, dear," said Constance, laughing as she took off her bonnet, "as soon as you have quite made up your own mind, let me hear the difficulty; that's the regular plan you know."

"Not mine, indeed," said Isabel; "will you have some luncheon?"

"Luncheon! we early people are beginning to think of dinner," said Constance.

"Oh! by-the-by, I have never shewn you that new pattern of worsted work," said Isabel rising; "at least it's silk, not worsted. I'll—"

“Don't fetch it, pray,” said Constance ; “because if you have taken too many or too few stitches in your moor's turban, you know I cannot set it right for you.”

“What good spirits you are in, Constance !” said Isabel sighing.

“And are not you, dear ? What's the matter ?” said Constance taking her hand.

“Oh, yes !” returned Isabel ; “and I have hardly told you yet, Constance, how I rejoice about Mr. Forde and you. I think you are so suited ; and I like extremely what I have seen of him. Do you know he reminds me a little, only a little, of—”

“Oh ! do tell me of whom,” said Constance.

“Of Mr. Bohun—Captain, now he is, I believe.”

“Do you think so ? Captain Bohun is so very quiet.”

“*Is !*” cried Isabel, her whole face lighting up, “have you seen him lately, then ?”

“Yes ; he is in the same regiment with

my cousin ; they both came to our house the other day."

Isabel sat thinking for some time, and then said, " Oh ! about Mr. Forde—how strangely things happen !"

" Do they not—so strangely," said Constance. " I do think it was wonder as much as any thing that made me not say no."

" He will be a happy man, Constance," said Isabel, " you are true in every word."

" I am sure I am," said Constance ; " but nobody cared about it before."

" Well ; and women seldom *can* be true," said Isabel ; " so many things prevent it."

" Oh, no !" said Constance, " there are no circumstances too hard for God to guide us through."

" Oh ! that reminds me," said Isabel ; " you have heard about Lord Bevis coming hither—you talk like him sometimes—well of course you know—and that is why I wished to see you—what mamma thinks of his visits."

“ Well, dear, and what do *you* ?” asked Constance.

“ Oh, he is frightful !” cried Isabel. “ I am ready to faint whenever I come into the room. He walks lame, and is crooked besides ; and those deep-set eyes look through you ! I only wish he could look into my heart and see what I really thought of him, but that cannot be.”

“ Cannot you show it ?” asked Constance.

“ What before mamma ? Oh, Constance ! if she does not think me agreeable enough to him, I have seen her lips turn white with rage.”

“ My dear Isabel !” said Constance.

“ But he really has the best heart—so kind, so considerate ; the very nurse who caused the mischief lives on his bounty in a cottage, somewhere. I am sure I wish she had not let him fall. And he has so long wanted something to love, and fixed so unfortunately upon me.”

“ And cannot you love such a man ?”



“ Why, Constance, you don't know how short he is. And then his voice is low, but very harsh ; only fancy if he were to speak loud, and if he does but pass his hand through his hair, he looks exactly like a maniac ; indeed, I should not wonder if he were a little mad.”

“ And what will you do ?”

“ Just what mamma pleases, and you know what that will be. Lady Bevis ! anything for a coronet ! Not that I care for such things ; for so that I could have every thing handsome about me, I have no ambition at all to make a great match.”

“ Oh ! dear Isabel, don't deceive him,” said Constance, “ there's too much at stake ; think what he would feel to find, when it is too late, that you never gave him your heart.”

“ Oh, but I really mean—let's see—to-morrow I am going to a ball ; but next day, or some day soon, I will sit down and talk myself into loving him.”

“No, do not laugh about it !”

“No,” said Isabel, who had talked herself into a very excited state, “no, because after all it will end in a tragedy. I shall marry a man I hate, and in course of time run away with a man I love ; my husband will shoot himself, and I—”

“Oh ! for the sake of womanhood,” exclaimed Constance, “do not say so, even in jest ; do not believe such a termination possible. Let nothing, no threats, no bribe, lead you to marry where you do not love. Oh, surely there is nothing that life affords worth such a falsehood !”

“Well, but you would not let me finish my picture,” said Isabel very calmly ; “I was going to say, I should die in a work-house.”

“Why will you pain me by talking so ?” asked Constance.

“I am sure,” said Isabel, laughing heartily, “you could not say that I should not deserve such a catastrophe.”

“Perhaps not ; but I should not be the less sorry,” said Constance, half-frightened by her friend’s changing manner.

“Would you come and see me ?” asked Isabel.

“Oh, do not talk so !”

“Well, but would you ?”

“Of course I would,” returned Constance. “And now be serious : as soon as you can, write to Lord Bevis, and be very honest ; then when you have explained your feelings, if you are both contented—”

“I’ll tell you, Constance,” said Isabel. “Once, when I really think I had a heart, you know the time mamma made me write to Captain Bohun, I carried a letter of my own about me for three weeks in the hopes of finding some means of sending it ; and when we walked out, mamma suspected me, I think, and always took the side of the way next the letter box. Not one of the servants would have dared take it for me, and at last I burnt it. Now judge what chance I have of sending one ; besides, her

fury, if the match were broken off—you have no idea at all of mamma.”

Constance felt very glad that she had not.

“At least,” pursued Isabel, “unless you would help me.”

“But how, dear Isabel? You would not have a letter pass through my hands; you know I should not be justified in—”

“No, not that way; but I have some hope of escape now I hear that Captain Bohun is in the neighbourhood, if I could but meet him.”

“But Isabel, dear, two years have passed; even you might be forgotten in that time.”

Isabel smiled, and said “he had been very ill-treated, certainly; but still she thought that a word from her would have the effect of inducing him to forget all the past. Only, Constance, when you see him, try and learn how he feels towards me, and then I shall know what to do next. One thing I am resolved on, any marriage is preferable to the life I lead

at home. I will accept any alternative to escape from this roof."

"I will try and find out what you wish," said Constance; "but Captain Bohun is so very silent that even if I chance to see him, you must not be disappointed if I learn nothing. And do wait before you decide against Lord Bevis, because time will reconcile you to his peculiarities; and he seems to be so excellent a person."

"Will you change, Constance?" said Isabel, as her friend rose to take leave.

"What do you mean, dear?"

"Why, if you should grow tired of Mr. Forde, I will take him off your hands in exchange for Lord Bevis."

Constance laughed and blushed a little, but made no answer.

"You won't?" said Isabel, holding her back as she was about to leave the room.

"Ah! Constance, all his virtues would never reconcile you to his appearance, though you have been exhorting me in his behalf."

“ I’m sure they would,” said Constance, slipping out of the room, “ if—if I were not—”

“ Better engaged !” said Isabel ; and Constance heard her silver laugh as she went down stairs.

She had been a little agitated by her conversation, and so took a path that would lead her home by a somewhat longer route, through a meadow and by the side of the mill-stream, a winding brook that led among rushes and osiers, over a pebbly bed and through rocky banks, with here and there a clump of ash or a sturdy oak reflected in the transparent water.

A sudden turn in the stream brought her in sight of two persons engaged in fishing ; Edgar was one, and to her great surprise, Captain Bohun the other.

“ Hush ! Constance, now don’t speak a word !” cried Edgar with great eagerness, totally forgetting that one voice was nearly as bad for sport as another ; “ you’ll startle the fish ! There’s such a beauty under that

stone—there—you can hardly see him ; and keep from the bank or he'll catch sight of your pink gown. Now—gently now ; don't laugh !”

Constance could not obey the last part of his directions ; for she had, by no means, a profound idea of his sagacity as a brother of the angle, and he was encumbered, moreover, with a rod much too long for him, and an old green fishing jacket of his brother's that came over his fingers' ends.

Captain Bohun took off his hat, and she was going to pass at once, but remembering Isabel's entreaties, she paused.

“I am really sorry I came this way,” said she ; “I know it is very provoking to be interrupted in fishing : it is almost the only thing that puts my brother out of temper.”

“What ! is he so devoted an angler ?” said Captain Bohun smiling, and laying his hand on Edgar's shoulder.

“No, my eldest brother, the owner of

that jacket," replied Constance, bursting into a fresh laugh as she surveyed it.

Captain Bohun laughed too, and Edgar coloured up and told Constance that she was a humbug.

"But I assure you I am not so keen a sportsman as to regret such an interruption," said Captain Bohun in a very pleasant manner.

Constance bowed, and was about to pass him again; but he looked as if he was going to speak, as with a woman's readiness she turned to Edgar, and asked him if he had really caught anything.

"I had a bite though," he replied, "and if you had not come up just then—"

Another laugh came from Constance and Captain Bohun; after all, she thought, if he was silent, there was some fun about him.

"We mean to have capital sport next time," he said, looking at Edgar; "this is not a good day for fishing—much too clear; we are not in fault nor our tackle either."

"I should think not," said Edgar, screwing the joints of his rod very hard together.



"I think," said Captain Bohun, "you know some people in this neighbourhood with whom I was formerly acquainted."

"Yes," said Constance, "the Hernshaws."

"How are they?" asked Captain Bohun. "Sir George used to be very—"

Very stupid, Constance knew he was, but she did not know he was afflicted with any other complaint, so she said they were all very well.

"And Miss Hernshaw?" he said, hesitating.

"I have just been to see her," replied Constance; "she is well, and I do think more beautiful than ever."

Now Constance was herself looking remarkably pretty that morning, with the most lovely bloom on her cheeks which gave more than usual brilliancy to her soft grey eyes. Captain Bohun glanced at her as if he thought so; at least, he received her intelligence with great unconcern, and asked carelessly if Miss Hernshaw was going to be married.

Constance replied with some confusion that she didn't know exactly. There was a short pause, and then she said :

“How strange I should meet you ! Isabel had just been inquiring about you.”

“She does me great honour,” said Captain Bohun, disdainfully.

“Well,” said Constance, rather mischievously ; “I think it was mutual after all—this honour.”

Captain Bohun smiled and acknowledged that she was right, and as she turned her steps towards home, he took up his tackle and prepared to accompany her.

“I say,” exclaimed Edgar in an impressive whisper, and pulling Constance back by the sleeve, “papa has asked him and Eustace to dinner, so I came with him to fish, and I heard cook asking mamma to give out some cranberries, and I dare say it's for a tart ; and Tim and I went down to the stable to look at his horse, and it's a regular good one, an iron-grey, and I'll be bound we shall find Mr. Forde when we

get home ; and Eustace stopped behind to smoke a cigar down in the yard, and oh ! such fun ! he gave one to Tim and made him ill."

"I can tell Eustace if he does so again, I shall be very angry with him," said Constance ; " he is just like a monkey, so ugly and mischievous !"

When the party assembled before dinner, Mr. Forde was beside Constance, helping her to make a small bouquet from a magnificent cluster of choice flowers which he had brought her. There is no occupation so graceful and becoming as that of arranging flowers—to a pretty woman at least ; but Constance, quite unconscious that she was looking very charming, went on selecting, and grouping, and throwing some aside, until she had finished her own and her mamma's nosegay ; while Mr. Forde and Captain Bohun and her cousin stood watching her.

"Now which is the best of these two," said she raising her eyes to Mr. Forde ;

“ take time to consider, because you know it is a very important subject.”

Mr. Forde stooped down and whispered something to her ; she blushed and laughed, and shook her head. Nonsense, I dare say it was, or he would have said it out loud. However, she gave him a moss rose-bud, and went to fasten one in her papa's coat, and presented one of the bouquets to her mamma, and asked to be praised for tying it up so nicely, and then returned to her seat.

“ Are we to be excluded ?” asked Eustace in his usual tone.

“ Eh ?” said Constance rather sharply.

He repeated the question a little more clearly.

“ Now I hear,” said she. Captain Bohun smiled. Constance caught his eye and nearly laughed out. “ It is a great deal more than you deserve,” said she, giving him a flower ; “ but, however, here is to your speedy amendment, and wishing you may leave off smoking at your earliest con-

venience: is that the way they propose toasts in *your's*?"

"Our's don't generally drink toasts, I think," said Eustace.

"Tee-totallers perhaps!" returned Constance. Eustace warmly endeavoured to exculpate his regiment from so heinous a charge. Constance turned to Captain Bohun and offered him a beautiful rose in silence.

He thanked her, and asked if she had ever studied the language of flowers.

"Not one word," said she, "of that French nonsense that was published some time ago, that unnatural attempt to pervert flowers from their real meaning; but they have a language to people who are fond of them—a morality, a poetry, and all our homely English flowers are registered by our early poets in fragments that must make the literature of the whole world seem poor beside them."

"I didn't know, Constance, that you were romantic," said Eustace.

"Don't regret it," said Constance; "it

was ignorance on your part, certainly ; but still don't be sorry, because when one thinks that you've been all the way to Malta and back again, one feels what a number of things you must know ; what with the government house, and the churches, and the orange trees, and the barracks, you must have come home stored with such a quantity of facts and ideas that for my part I'm quite afraid of you."

Eustace did not exactly understand his cousin, but he had a vague idea that she admired him very much, perhaps not quite so much this time as the last, because he did not happen to have his uniform on ; still there was no doubt he was an officer all the same, and he only hoped she recollected that circumstance ; but before he had quite made up his mind, dinner was announced, and Constance glided past him on Mr. Forde's arm, leaving him to bring up the rear with Master Edgar.

## CHAPTER IX.

I was proud :

I did prevail with one whose youth and beauty  
Deserved a choice more suitable in both :  
Love drove the bargain, and the truth of love  
Confirmed it, I conceived.

THE LADY'S TRIAL.

Yes, yes ! that boon, life's richest treat  
He had, or fancied that he had—  
Say, 'twas but in his own conceit,  
The fancy made him glad.

\* \* \* \* \*

The fair fulfilment of his poesy,  
When his young heart first yearn'd for sympathy !

COLERIDGE.

It cannot be supposed that Lady Hershaw continued during this time in a state of inactivity. On the contrary, she was forwarding her daughter's interests by every means in her power.

She encouraged Lord Bevis ; she terrified Isabel ; and she instructed Sir George to be ready with his consent and blessing at any moment that they might be asked. So well did she prepare things, that a very short time elapsed before Lord Bevis demanded an interview with Sir George, and made a formal tender of his hand, which was as formally accepted. Sir George lost not an instant in communicating the welcome news to his lady, and she proceeded instantly, in a state of great exultation to her daughter's dressing-room, whom she found under the hands of her maid completing rather a late morning toilet, the result of a very late ball the night before.

"Josephine, you may go," said Lady Hernshaw.

The maid disappeared instantly.

Isabel selected a brooch from her jewel-box, and began to fasten it very carefully into her dress.

"Lord Bevis is here, love," said her Ladyship.



“ Dear, how early he comes !” said Isabel. “ I thought I should have had time to finish this novel. I prefer it infinitely to his conversation.”

“ You must not say so now,” said Lady Hernshaw ; “ he has just proposed to your father, and has been accepted.”

This delightful intelligence produced a violent burst of tears from Isabel, and these in turn called forth a series of bitter upbraidings from her mother.

“ Ungrateful creature !” she exclaimed ; “ is this the only means that suggests itself to you of thanking me for my assiduity ? Would you have ever received this splendid proposal, I wonder, but for my care ?”

“ I cannot be grateful, mamma,” said Isabel through her tears, “ I cannot love Lord Bevis.”

“ I should be obliged to you to inform me,” said her Ladyship, taking her seat with much dignity in an arm chair just opposite to her daughter, “ who ever expressed the

slightest wish that you should love Lord Bevis? I believe I never required it of you."

"No, mamma," replied Isabel; "but if I could—"

"I really hope that your very expensive education has not been so utterly wasted," said Lady Hernshaw, "that you mean to indulge in the village vulgarities of a regular sweetheart. I trust I did not pay two hundred a-year to Mademoiselle Bertine to teach you to *fall in love* like a milk-maid."

"I learned, I do think, falsehood enough from her to content you," said Isabel, struggling with her tears.

"There's your poor father," said Lady Hernshaw, shifting her mode of attack, "rejoicing over your good fortune; an event which may prove very useful to him when he happens to be a little distressed for ready money. Your Lord has more than he can possibly want."

"Am I to be sold then?" exclaimed Isabel, roused for a moment into anger; "for—for—"

She knew too well that anger would avail her nothing, and sat down in mute despondency, leaning her arm on her toilet, and turning her head from her mother that she might not perceive her emotion.

“If you will kindly inform me, Miss Hernshaw,” said her Ladyship coldly, “when those tears are likely to cease, I will then return for you ; don’t hurry, on any account. Lord Bevis is waiting in the library to receive you ; but he will only the better prepare his raptures for your condescension by this short delay.”

“He will not treat me as my mother does,” thought Isabel ; “I will escape from this even to him.”

She dried her eyes, and turning to the glass, arranged the rich folds of her pale silk dress, while her mother adjusted her beautiful lace collerette, and then they went smiling down stairs hand in hand.

“I have brought this poor, silly, frightened girl with me, my Lord,” said Lady Hernshaw, “that she may tell you what

I know she feels, naturally with more effect than I can do."

She placed her daughter's hand in that of Lord Bevis and left the room.

Now Isabel expected a burst of joyful thanks, such as she had received on several occasions, and she schooled herself accordingly; but when Lord Bevis, still holding her hands in his, preserved a long and absolute silence, with his melancholy eyes fixed full upon her, she became totally unnerved, and suddenly breaking away from him, she threw herself upon a sofa and burst again into tears.

"Isabel!" said Lord Bevis, seating himself beside her. She looked up. He seemed to have taken a desperate resolve and hurried on. "I hardly dare to interpret your emotion; but, if you would shew mercy to me, tell me at once whether you can love me. Believe me, it will be with no surprise that I shall hear your sentence, if, as I fear, it is unfavourable to my hopes. I cannot expect to win you. Now, with

your hand in mine, your mother's voice in my ear that seemed to give you to me, I do believe I never can attain your heart. Yet, stay ; perhaps you have not thought that while your exquisite beauty might purchase from other men the divided homage of a few short years, I devote to you the whole affections of a heart in which no other idol has ever reigned for an instant. Can these weigh with you against those graces in which I know myself deficient ? Will time—I do not press for a speedy answer ; will any thing—”

Isabel had hastily brushed the tears from her eyes, and sat listening ; and when through his agitation he ceased to speak, she collected her thoughts, and knew that she must make him some reply.

She felt that she dared not refuse him ; her mother would never forgive her : she was unhappy enough now, but then her condition would be insupportable. She felt no sympathy for his condition, and very little gratitude for his love. All

the best feelings of the heart cannot be long stifled with impunity; but she knew that wealth and luxury were certain to attend her as the wife of Lord Bevis, and though she trembled as she surveyed him, she made an effort and began,

“My Lord, I feel that—”

But here some remembrance seemed to cross her mind, and she paused.

“You have but to say one word,” said Lord Bevis; “to banish me from your presence for ever, perhaps broken-hearted, but still more content than if by my success I caused you an instant’s pain.”

Isabel was touched a little; she even thought it would be wrong to trifle with such earnest affection, it would be better to undeceive him at once. She rose, but as she was about to speak she heard her mother’s footsteps pass the door, not as if about to enter, but the very sound recalled her to a sense of her obligations; she turned to Lord Bevis who stood beside her, as pale as marble.

“ If,” she said softly, and extending her hand as she spoke, “ you can value any thing so unworthy—”

She felt that he clasped her to his heart ; she heard him pouring forth his thanks and blessings in a voice that seemed to her far distant : confused by the sickness of her brain and heart, she sat with all the feelings that announce the approach of fainting, yet without the relief of utter insensibility.

## CHAPTER X.

Thou fairest, yet the falsest woman  
That ever broke man's heart-strings !

THE NICE VALOUR.

Of love good friends this is my rede  
Howe'er secure you seem to be,  
All joy may in a moment flee ;  
Mine seemed all joy and truth, by Heaven,  
Yet lasted not a whole day even :  
'Tis, where nought is sure, sheer folly  
In false love to trust so wholly.

BERNARD OF VENTADOUR.

“ ARE you not happy, Constance ? ” said Isabel.

She had been drinking tea at the rectory ; for now that her marriage was arranged, Lady Hernshaw set no bounds to her indulgence, and allowed her to see as much of her friend as was compatible with the demand



Lord Bevis made upon her society, and they had strolled out in the cool evening. Isabel and Constance, Mr. Forde and Edgar, and the two friends were now seated under a cluster of tall elms, having sent on their escort to gather flowers from the tangled hedge that skirted a neighbouring park, and ran along one side of the narrow lane down which they had walked, the rosy hues of the fading hawthorns proclaiming that the scent had departed, and the straying branches of honey-suckle and sweet-briar filling the cool air with delicious perfume.

“Are you not quite happy, Constance?” she repeated.

“I am, indeed,” said Constance, rousing herself from a reverie which the absolute stillness of the air had brought on; “I can scarcely believe my happiness. There is only one subject on which I feel anxious, and that is your engagement with—”

“Oh! but, dear Constance, set your mind at rest,” said Isabel; “I never ex-

pected you know to marry a person whom I liked ; I knew mamma would not let me choose, and she might have done worse for me. But you are a miracle, Constance ! the course of your true love seems to run so smooth."

" Oh ! I hope it may not be too smooth," said Constance. " I cannot tell you, Isabel, how devoted he seems to me, and I have nothing but an honest heart ; surely, men are never won and retained by that alone."

" You are looking so pretty just now, Constance," said her friend, " with your bright hair just ruffled, giving such a dim radiance to your head and face, and that carmine colour mounting softly up as you talk, you are yourself the best answer to your doubts."

" Ay, Isabel, you can afford to be generous," said Constance, smiling as she turned her eyes upon her friend, who, in all the languid grace of her surpassing beauty, had fallen into a position from which a sculptor might have drawn inspiration.

“ There is something very pleasant in a coronet,” said Isabel, after a short silence. “ I shall have it embroidered on every thing I possess. I had better make the most of a toy that I shall purchase so dearly.”

“ Oh, Isabel,” said Constance, “ a word from you would set you free at once.”

“ Ah ! that is a very weak argument,” returned her friend ; “ it may be as difficult to speak one word as to break through iron bars sometimes ; and you are not very considerate to Lord Bevis either, who is always so pleased when he hears I am going to see you, thinking, and with some reason too, that you have a share of your good father’s excellence. I have settled one thing, Constance,” she continued, “ and that is, that we will both be married on the same day ; so recollect. I am sure you would not oppose me in such a trifle ; and then you will see my Lord, and what a gratification that will be ! Oh, here comes Mr. Forde and Edgar, and somebody they have picked

up by the way ! I hope a pleasant addition to our party ; for you, no offence, my dear Constance, contrive to monopolize the eyes and conversation of your faithful swain. Oh, thank you, Mr. Forde what delicious honey-suckle !”

Constance was wondering at the sudden change in her friend's manner, so different from what she could herself assume, when she saw Isabel stop short, change colour, and look breathlessly towards the gentleman who was coming leisurely along with Edgar. It was Captain Bohun.

“ He must still be attached to her,” thought Constance, “ he is always about the neighbourhood.”

Captain Bohun had a small pocket-book open in his hand, and Edgar was looking over the contents as they came slowly up. Flies for fishing they seemed to be.

“ It is the best I know,” she heard him say, as he joined them ; “ I don't think trout would rise to any other, at least in this month.”

"Oh, yes!" cried Edgar, "there's a very pretty fly Tom Barlow makes, which he says beats every thing for trout; he lives at the mill, the boy with only one leg."

"Good evening, Miss D'Oyley," said Captain Bohun raising his hat to her. He glanced at Miss Hernshaw as if not quite decided whether he was acquainted with her or not; and then making her a slight bow turned again to Edgar.

"We must call upon this Barlow when next we go out fishing," he said.

Constance just stole a look at Isabel. Her face was suffused with a burning blush, which faded completely away and left her as pale as marble.

"But I don't know him myself," said Edgar; "he told a fellow about his flies, who told Tim: that's the way I heard of them."

"Will you introduce us, Forde?" asked Captain Bohun.

"I am sorry I am not acquainted with the individual," said Mr. Forde, throwing him-

self on the grass just at the feet of Constance.

"I am the only person competent to introduce you," said Constance. "I am on bowing, almost on speaking terms with Master Barlow, who, by the bye, is not much older than Edgar; his mother is a very old gossip of mine."

"I shall be so much obliged to you," said Captain Bohun.

Constance tried to find out whether he was looking at Isabel; but he was leaning against a tree turning over the flies in his book, and as far as she could judge not even thinking of any thing else.

"Bohun, are you likely to be ordered abroad this autumn?" asked Mr. Forde.

"Not that I know of," he replied.

"There, that's a brown hackle!" said Edgar, stopping his hand.

"*That* is—genuine," said Captain Bohun.

"Do you think Colonel Bohun would retire if your regiment was sent out of the country again?" said Mr. Forde.

"No;" said Captain Bohun, with a

slight laugh, "nothing would ever make him retire ; he is so fond of his profession."

"Which is not your case?"

"Not unless there was something doing," he replied.

"Has Sir Guy any children?" asked Mr. Forde.

"Not as yet ;" returned Captain Bohun.

"What sort of a woman is Lady Bohun?"

"Much like other women," replied Captain Bohun quietly.

"I wonder what that means?" said Constance, looking up and laughing.

"In the first place, Miss D'Oyley," said Captain Bohun coming nearer to her, and speaking in a lower tone, "it means something as unlike you as possible."

"I don't consider that as a compliment at all," replied Constance ; "a woman's best quality is to resemble her sex."

The party rose to continue their walk ; Constance made a sign to Mr. Forde to offer his arm to Isabel. She fell back with Edgar, and Captain Bohun walked by her side.

“ You do not ask after your cousin, Miss D'Oyley,” he said, after a short pause.

“ Tell him I did not,” replied Constance, “ it may do him some good. But have you been fishing this evening, that I meet you in this part of the world ?”

“ No,” he replied ; “ I have been dining with my father at Mr. Wyndham's, the owner you know of that old house that stands within the park yonder, and I stole out to take a walk while the old gentlemen were dozing over their claret.”

Constance was wishing very much to let him know that her friend had no share in his rejection ; but then, if he had outlived his attachment, how forward, how indelicate would such a communication appear ! She wished that he would say something that could lead to such a topic ; but the next remark he made was on the beauty of the rising moon, which now appeared shining, all silver, behind a screen of young beech trees, that lay below them in the park adjoining.



“How very dark the beech always looks by moonlight, darker than any other foliage,” remarked Constance.

Captain Bohun did not appear to hear the observation, though he paused, as if to give her an opportunity of enjoying the scene.

Mr. Forde and Isabel were strolling up the lane, and Edgar had been searching the banks for glow worms ; and having found one, was securing it in sycamore leaves for the purpose of taking it home.

“Miss D'Oyley,” said Captain Bohun turning abruptly to her, “I fear you may think me impertinent in what I am about to say, but it is so impossible to behold you without interest, that I venture at the risk of offending you, to warn you against too affectionate an intimacy with Miss Hershaw. I have the highest opinion of my friend Forde, but a beautiful girl who makes a system of conquest is a most dangerous minister to the vanity of our sex. I think you know how truly I have cause to say so much ; but believe my

assurance, that I am by no means the only sufferer by her hollow fascinations."

"Oh, stop," said Constance, "I so much wished to tell you, but feared to do so, I may now, I think—that Isabel had no part in that affair: you do not know how completely she is in her mother's power. You have no idea of Lady Hernshaw's tyranny in such matters."

He shook his head. Constance traced an incredulous smile on his face.

"It is but lately," he said, "that in very idleness she engaged the affections of a man whom she knew to be affianced to a young lady, her friend, as the phrase goes; a man whom she never dreamed of accepting when she estranged him from the innocent woman she wronged."

"She is so very beautiful," said Constance faintly.

"Is that a plea," he asked, "that she should enact the serpent?"

"I only meant that it might be involuntary," said Constance.

“ Believe my honour that there is nothing involuntary in Miss Hernshaw’s coquetry,” replied Captain Bohun. “ I speak from sad experience, and through an admiration of your candour that leads me, I am afraid, too far to intrude upon your patience.”

“ I am sure it is very kindly meant,” said Constance, turning sick at heart, not from any apprehension of her own danger, but from distress at the imputations cast upon her friend ; “ but I think you judge her rather sternly—men always do—that is, they have not so much opportunity, I mean,” said poor Constance, getting more and more confused, “ you attribute to her the defects of her education, and her mother—”

“ She’s a dreadful old woman certainly,” said Captain Bohun in a lighter tone, for he saw the embarrassment of Constance ; “ only,” he added, “ I should be more sorry than our slight acquaintance would seem to warrant if you were to trust too implicitly to Miss Hernshaw’s friendship.”

“Even,” said Constance with some hesitation, “if your worst anticipations should be correct, I should rejoice in it so far, that immeasurably as I know myself her inferior, I would not consent to accept a blind preference from any one, but would demand to be singled out from the whole world, in presence even of such creatures as Isabel Hernshaw.”

As she spoke, he looked full in her face with that expression of answering intelligence which must be of such rare occurrence, when mind meets mind, and the sympathies of a character are all aroused by the disclosure of some feeling congenial to themselves. Constance felt her heart beat as she dropped her eyes on the ground. And she, what reason had she for unfolding so much of her sentiments? She did not know; but the soft and subdued moonlight does sometimes call out things from young hearts which would otherwise remain unsaid.

“At least forgive me for my interference,” said he holding out his hand.

She took it; and not being very well able to speak, for it was one thing to talk about resigning Mr. Forde, and another thing to feel that she might be put to the trial, she made a sign that they should overtake their companions.

They were leaning against a little wicket gate waiting their arrival.

"I am afraid you are tired," said Mr. Forde, coming to the side of Constance.

"No; but what can we do but loiter," said Constance, "beneath such a moon?"

"Bohun, do you remember the moon on the Mediterranean?" asked Mr. Forde.

"Perfectly; but I hope you don't mean to say that their moonlight is better than ours."

"Not better? nor their gorgeous sunsets?"

"I own that I prefer the more delicate tints in our grey climate," said Captain Bohun.

"To think of owning such a thing!"

exclaimed Mr. Forde ; " I like them better myself, but I never own it."

" Is it not growing late ?" said Isabel. They were the first words she had spoken before Captain Bohun. Constance started at her tone.

" It is indeed," replied Mr. Forde ; " we must be moving homewards, unless you really wish to enact the Lady in Comus, as you said just now, and then we will leave you behind to

— awake the courteous echo,  
To give you answer from her mossy couch.

" No," said Isabel, " I can enact nothing to-night, I am too weary." She leaned upon Constance as she spoke.

" The shortest way to your house," said Captain Bohun, addressing Constance, " is that steep bridle-path that skirts the wood."

" Thank you," said Constance : Isabel did not speak.

"This is my way," he said, pushing open the wicket.

"Recollect that you dine with me on Wednesday," said Mr. Forde.

"I will not forget. Good evening."

He raised his hat to the ladies, and turned into the shrubberies that led towards the house.

"I dare say," said Edgar, "that the two old fellows will have drunk up all the claret before he gets back."

"Why, you greedy boy," said Constance, "do you suppose Captain Bohun would care about it?"

"I should," said Edgar; "there's nothing like a good glass of Lafitte this hot weather."

"That comes straight from Eustace," said Constance; "there's all his conceit, almost his lisp in your manner. What business have you these ten years to come to know claret from hock?"

"Eustace says that at his mess—"

"Don't let me hear you," said Constance;

“Eustace never said a good thing that I recollect. Oh! we are close at home, run on and open the door: I am so glad for your sake, Isabel.”

As they entered she felt her hand grasped by her friend. “You are right,” whispered Isabel, “I—I can be forgotten, Constance.”



## CHAPTER XI.

I, under fair pretence of friendly ends  
And well placed words of glozing courtesy,  
Wind me into the easy-hearted man,  
And hug him into snares.

COMUS.

It seemed to Constance that as soon as Isabel found she had lost all power over the heart of Captain Bohun, she became much more reconciled to her intended marriage. She even spoke sometimes in praise of Lord Bevis, and related from time to time some instance of his generosity which she had heard, or some proof of his talent, of which she seemed to entertain a very exalted idea. She laughed when she mentioned the jewels he was in the habit of giving her, and said that they made her

mamma worship him ; but Constance saw that they had no little influence on her own opinion. She said one day that she was very anxious for the marriage to take place, and asked Constance to guess the reason.

Constance said, " she hoped that she was now so sensible of the good qualities of Lord Bevis, that she was enabled to return his regard."

" No," said Isabel, laughing, " I could not do that, I should have so much to return. The fact is, I see a great deal too much of him ; he is hanging about our house half the day. Now, when we are married, I hope we shall see very little of each other. I shall take care to be at his town-house all the season, giving splendid parties, which he hates ; and I think I shall make out the rest of the year at a watering-place."

" Dear Isabel," said Constance, " I wish you would not jest upon such matters. Do you know, though I am sure your heart is

too good to put them into effect, it makes me quite uncomfortable to hear you planning such things."

"Well," said Isabel, laughing, "time will show ; but he is a bold man."

"In what respect, Isabel?"

"In marrying a pretty wife, who does not care for him in the least."

"Does he know it?" asked Constance.

"No ; I acquit him there," returned Isabel ; "he goes blindfold into the snare as ever poor bird did."

Constance was silent ; she was deeply pained.

"Constance," said Isabel, taking both her hands, "whatever faults I commit now, whatever I may commit, blame mamma and not me ; promise that you will."

"I don't like to blame anybody, dear," said Constance.

"Yes, but do not blame me. You are the only person I love ; and you must not think ill of me ; you must come and see me in town. Berkeley Square

I think the house is in, but I'll ask my Lord, next time I see him ; and then I shall be alone, with some old aunt of his to *chaperon* me, whom I'll find out by that time ; and we shall be so happy !”

“ I'll not come to see you, if you are not with Lord Bevis,” said Constance. “ You said, very rightly, that a beautiful woman is not safe away from her husband, especially if she is not much attached to him.”

“ Did I say so ?—you mischievous creature, how you turn my words against me !” said Isabel. “ Well, then, I'll be very good, and pin Lord Bevis to my apron string. I'm sure he wouldn't object to the situation. By the bye, I wish one wore aprons now. Mamma was looking out some lace the other day, and she found one of old point which had belonged to her grandmother ; such a beauty !”

Constance had often wondered at the rapid transitions in which her friend indulged, but never more than now. How-

ever, she said, "that aprons of point-lace must have been very handsome, and very expensive;" and then there was a short pause, during which Isabel made great progress in her worsted work, and Constance hemmed away very soberly at a muslin frill.

"I am so glad mamma lets me come here so much," said Isabel; "I think that, but for such a relief, I should grow restive, and turn off my Lord altogether. Only fancy mamma's face at such a crisis!—think of her sitting deliberately down to pack up all the sapphires and emeralds. She says my trinket box would look well for a duchess: only imagine her returning them!"

"Oh, Isabel!" said Constance, very gently, "you should not laugh at your mamma."

"What a good girl you are, Constance," said Isabel, gaily; "but there is Mr. Forde riding up the road as if he were pursued by the furies. There are two things, you see, which make a man ride fast, pursuit

and prospect ; but which is the strongest inducement, I cannot tell you exactly ; I wish I could. Well, really mamma is right : Mr. Forde is very handsome ; and he is one of those persons who look best at a distance."

Constance smiled faintly : she thought for a moment of Captain Bohun's warning.

The thought vanished, however, when Mr. Forde entered, all animation, with his daily offering of choice flowers, her favourite ones, too, which he had gathered himself, or said he had, to the utter dismay of the gardener.

Isabel marked the lingering pressure of his hand, as he spoke to Constance, the affectionate tone of his common morning salutation, the eagerness with which he helped her to arrange her flowers. A thought, not exactly defined, came into her mind, that she should like to interest him—not to annoy or wound her dear Constance, but only to make him a little

more aware of her presence—just a little more polite to her than he was when Constance was by.

But in this laudable endeavour she seemed to make but little progress ; she entangled her worsted, indeed, and complained of it ; but Mr. Forde was amusing himself with putting the work-box of Constance in complete disorder. She rose and went to the piano, and then he exerted himself to follow her, and place a music-book ; but he returned to his seat, and never heard a word of her song. So Isabel gave up the attempt, and generally chose such times for her visits, when she knew he was certain to be absent from the rectory.

Meanwhile, time passed ; flew, as Constance thought. She had never been so happy—never in her life so important. Nobody could call at the rectory without asking to see her ; no one was the object of attention when she was present. She could not have a headache without such pity and good

wishes, and even inquiries, which she might have died without exciting at any other time. And the gentlemen, how lovely they thought her, now that somebody had thought so first ! What a “ nice creature ” she was called ; how they admired her eyes and hair, and hands and feet ! If she had been a horse worth a hundred guineas, she could not have raised more discussion.

Her eldest brother passed the long vacation at Oxford. Edgar in due time returned to school. The summer passed, the autumn hurried on ; and Mr. Forde, who had been anything but patient during the intervening months, now became urgent that some time should be named for their marriage. Isabel still insisted that she herself and her friend should be married on the same day ; and after the usual difficulties and consultations, it was agreed that both marriages should take place early in December. Previous to this happy event, however, it was requisite that Mr. Forde should spend some



weeks in town, to arrange certain matters of business ; and Miss Hernshaw persuaded her mother, that they must also pass some time there, to superintend the more important affair of wedding dresses.

## CHAPTER XII.

For thereof comes all goodness and all worth  
All gentleness and honour thence come forth :  
Thence worship comes, content, and true heart's pleasure,  
And full assured trust, joy without measure,  
And jollity, fresh cheerfulness, and mirth.

CHAUCER.

It was a fine frosty morning ; Constance had been out walking with Mr. Forde, and on returning to the house they saw a carriage drawn up before the door. Tim was holding Mr. Forde's horse very valiantly by the nose, while his groom was carrying on an instructive conversation with the coachman respecting the appearance of his cattle, which his master's arrival broke off somewhat abruptly.

Mr. Forde would not go in, but he did

not seem anxious to go away either. He stood about, asking Constance a hundred unimportant questions ; now replacing her boa more closely about her throat, now declaring that he was keeping her in the cold, and still finding something that he had not said, and could not leave her for a whole week without saying.

“ I think you like frosty weather ? ”

“ Oh, yes !—It puts me in such spirits.”

“ You are looking so well to-day.”

“ Nonsense ! ” said Constance, turning away her head.

“ I have told Gilbert to send you carnations every day.”

“ Thank you.”

“ Miss Constance ! ” was shouted from the other end of the walk.

“ I am wanted,” said Constance, trying to get her hand away.

“ One moment. Is there anything—”

“ Nothing in the world that you can do for me in town. Good bye ! ”

“ Well but—shake hands ;—good bye ! ”

“There ;—take care of yourself.”

“And you—”

“Of course ; I always do,” said Constance, laughing, “Good bye, again.”

“Mr. Thornton and Mrs. Parker are in the drawing-room, Miss,” said Tim, approaching Constance as she stood watching Mr. Forde ride off, in happy forgetfulness that she had ever been sent for.

“Mrs. Parker—oh, dear !” said Constance, turning her steps towards the house.

Mrs. Parker was a little woman verging on seventy, plain, but expensive in her dress, and eccentric in her manners. She had a smooth voice almost resembling a lisp, and those perpetual curves about the mouth which denote pretty clearly a smiling hypocrisy.

“This is your daughter, Margaret ?” said Mrs. Parker, taking the hand of Constance in both her’s. “And very like you she is ; sweet creature ! And Edgar too, dear fellow, you look so well, all of you ! Edgar has his father’s nose, Mrs. D’Oyley ?”

“Do you think so, aunt?” returned Mrs. D'Oyley.

“Constance is very like her grandfather,” said Mr. Thornton surveying her through his spectacles.

“Like her grandfather!—oh! no, dear brother,” cried Mrs. Parker, afraid that this idea might interest Mr. Thornton in her behalf; “Margaret never was thought like the Thorntons, and Constance is her image.”

“I say she is,” maintained uncle Thornton, “so come hither, Constance, I want you to spend a few days with me at mother Parker's. Don't be afraid—with me, not her. I'll take care of you.”

“Well, I really should like that, uncle,” said Constance.

“That's right, then; I shall have you at last. The only one of my relations I ever needed to press.

“Ay, but then, uncle, I am the only one—no, I won't be vain.”

“The only one worth having, I suppose,”

said uncle Thornton, laughing heartily. "Take care you don't turn out like the parson's horse,—hard to catch, and then—you know the proverb."

"Constance, dear, come and talk with me a little," said Mrs. Parker, "I have a word to say to you."

"Say it out, then, sister Parker," cried Mr. Thornton.

"No, no, brother," said Mrs. Parker, assuming a playful air. "You see, my dear," she whispered, "it would be the greatest treat to me to have you in the spring, perhaps ;—but just now my house is so full :—there's Frederick just returned from his wedding tour—brought wife and lady's maid, and valet, and grooms—

"Oh ! certainly, aunt. I should be very sorry to intrude ; uncle, I will come and see you another time, when aunt Parker's house is less crowded."

"Nonsense !" exclaimed Mr. Thornton, (Mrs. Parker's face became a very fine study for an artist). "Come *now* ;—there's

room for twenty people at Fulham. Sister Parker will be delighted—”

She looked so, to be sure !

“ Oh ! yes,” she said, “ if dear Constance wouldn’t mind—”

“ Mind a house full of company ?—Why, what girl does ? Were you ever young, sister Parker ? Come hither, Sir ; what book do you read in Latin ?”

“ Horace, Sir,” said Edgar, looking very uncomfortable.

“ Have you begun Greek ?”

“ Yes, Sir.”

“ Uncle !” suggested Mrs. D’Oyley.

“ Yes, uncle,” repeated Edgar.

“ Are you in Euclid ?

“ Yes, uncle.”

Mr. Thornton proceeded to put several other questions usually addressed to school-boys, on the same principle that leads people to talk of pictures to an artist, or books to an author, simply because they would prefer conversing upon any other

topic. At last he rose to depart, and Mrs. Parker directly bustled about to find her gloves and her bag, and her boa, and to take a most touching leave of Mrs. D'Oyley and Constance, a little in the style of an eternal farewell upon the stage.

"To-morrow the carriage shall be sent for you, Constance," said uncle Thornton as he took his leave; "I shall be looking out for you about dinner time, and sister Parker will not have been so happy a long while, she'll tell you."

"Dear brother, what a droll man you are!" said Mrs. Parker, as they left the room.

"Yes, that will just do, mamma," said Constance, "Mr. Forde will be absent a week, and this day week I shall be at home again;—and I don't talk about leaving you for a few days, because our's will not deserve to be called a parting, so near as we shall be. You will have me running down every day to do all papa's writing, and all your needlework."



“ Ah! my child, you don't know yet ;” said Mrs. D'Oyley, kissing her.

“ I'm sure, unless Mr. Forde tells fibs, I am to do just as I please,” said Constance, gaily ; “ but look, it is beginning to snow, we shall have an early winter, and papa, I am afraid, will come home very cold.”

The next morning, the snow continued, but the carriage came at the proper time ; she stepped into it and was whirled off.

It was dusk when she arrived at Mrs. Parker's villa. A foreign servant came to the carriage door to help her to alight.

“ *Beaucoup de neige, Mademoiselle—beaucoup, beaucoup,*” he said, by way of caution, as she mounted the slippery steps ; an English servant, by the way, would have allowed her to fall if she had not come in her own carriage, and then have enjoyed a hearty laugh over it with his fellows.

It was time to dress for dinner. The foreign servant gave her into the care of an English one, who delivered her over to

a lady's maid, under whose auspices she made her toilet.

Constance thought that people who lived in a style inferior to that which she saw around her, were more courteous and comfortable in their modes of reception ; but this was a vulgar idea, and I beg my readers not to repeat it.

As soon as she was dressed, she was shewn into the drawing-room where Mr. Thornton was seated in an easy chair by the fire, and Frederick Parker leaning on the chimney-piece opposite, looking extremely cross and disagreeable. Mr. Thornton rose and welcomed her with extreme cordiality, and introduced her to young Parker, who honoured her with a stiff bend of the head, and a scowl from under his black brows something like that of a disappointed bandit. Mr. Thornton drew her chair close to his ; when young Parker renewed the conversation which her entrance had interrupted, by saying in a loud, rough voice, " I tell you, Sir, if you build

a conservatory on that side of the house, you will ruin Leyton altogether."

"I told you, Sir," returned uncle Thornton, (Constance, my dear, take a screen) "that Hoskins had seen my plans and said I could not possibly do better."

They were here interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Parker, who, with one hand tucked behind her, and her head stooping forwards, her favourite attitude, came up to Constance, and kissing her, uttered some sleek words of welcome.

"I don't call Hoskins anything of an architect," said Mr. Frederick in the same rough tone, "I only know at Rome—"

"You are a noodle, Sir," replied Mr. Thornton sharply; "Rome is one thing, and Herefordshire another thing, I presume."

"I know, at Rome," pursued young Parker endeavouring to talk through his uncle, "the great architect Alderoni—"

"Should never come near my premises, Sir, take my word for that," cried Mr.

Thornton. "I hate French fops, Sir. Where's Mrs. Frederick? And oh! ring the bell and see why they don't send up dinner, unless," said he, turning short round, "they are all gone to meeting, sister Parker."

Now Mrs. Parker was in the opinion of many people, herself included, a very devout attendant at religious meetings, and this was a constant subject of contention between her and her brother, who abhorred dissent, and held that salvation out of the pale of the Church of England was a vague chimera of which people would be convinced to their cost by and by.

"No, brother," said Mrs. Parker with her smooth voice, to all appearance unruffled; "Thursday is not meeting night."

"Why, ring then," said Mr. Thornton, shaking his hand impatiently at young Parker, "and ask them whether the cobbler teaches them that it's a sin to dine o' Thursdays. On Sundays, I know, he advocates starvation."

He never would designate the dissenting minister by any other name than the cobbler ; having heard, to his exquisite delight, that he had formerly been a shoemaker ; and yet this disrespectful mention of her pet preacher, Mrs. Parker bore for the sake of the thousands she hoped to reap at her brother's death ; although she had wealth even to overflowing.

“ Frederick, take your mother,” said Mr. Thornton, securing the hand of Constance, “ I attend to my own guests. Are you cold, child ?—The dining-room strikes like a well.”

Mrs. Frederick had not yet made her appearance ; she could not bear to be waited for, neither could she bear to be punctual ; however, before the soup was removed, she walked in, all satin, lace, and pearls ; looking, had her train been a little longer, as if she had just come from a drawing-room. The foreign servant pulled her chair back for her, and replied to her “ *prenez*,” as she

threw her cashmere on his arm, with a most obsequious bow.

Now Frederick Parker spoke very bad French, and it was the delight and glory of his valet to speak a very little very bad English ; and they conversed at intervals during dinner something in this manner :

“ *Nicole quel temps fait-il à present ?* ”

“ Oh ! very bad time, Sare ; the snow is foot dip.”

“ *Comment donc ? Encore plus de niege ?* ”

“ Frightful time ! frightful,” said the valet, with something between a shrug and a shiver.

Constance smiled at his translation of *temps affreux*, and turned her eyes upon Mrs. Frederick, who having honoured her with such a steady stare that proved she had not weak eyes, had now withdrawn her attention to her dinner. She was a little, fair woman, extremely dressed, and rather pretty. She was afflicted with very large hands, which she covered with rings ; and

having been long abroad, she took upon herself to do exactly as she liked, thinking that people would fancy everything she did was foreign, and admire it accordingly.

“Caroline, try this vol-au-vent,” said Mr. Frederick to his wife; “I think you’ll like it.”

“I—yes,” she replied. The dish was taken to her and she helped herself.

“Take it back,” said she to the foreign servant; “I can’t endure rice.” Her plate was removed.

Now Constance had never seen a vol-au-vent without rice, and thought Mrs. Frederick might have decided at once; but then Constance had never been to Rome.

“Take something else,” said Mr. Frederick.

“No, I’ll wait,” she replied.

“Look here, Constance,” said Mr. Thornton when the second course was put upon table, “when I was a boy, pheasants were plucked before they came to table; now they send them up with their tails dabbling

in the gravy. Mrs. Frederick, some pheasant?"

"If you please."

"Time you took something," muttered Mr. Thornton.

When she went into the drawing-room, Constance felt very lonely. Mrs. Parker began to knit and Mrs. Frederick sank into a large chair with a French novel in her hand, and her Italian greyhound nestled by her side.

Mrs. Parker and Mrs. Frederick were not on very loving terms and no conversation ensued. Coffee was served up: Mrs. Frederick took a cup and sent it away untasted, and asked for wafers, and was told there were none, and ordered a cup of black tea *unmixed*, and then went to sleep till the gentlemen came in, having taken out her pearl comb and given it to the greyhound to play with.

"Are you tired, Mrs. Frederick?" said uncle Thornton as he passed her chair.

"Dreadfully so," she said.



"I hope you mean to give us a little music," said Mr. Frederick.

"Presently," said his wife.

"Constance, dear, do you play?" asked Mrs. Parker.

"I can accompany myself; nothing more," she said.

"Come then, Constance," said Mr. Thornton, "give me an English song; it will be quite a treat to me."

"But uncle, I can't sing any popular music," said Constance.

"So much the better," he said; "give me something of Handel's."

Constance sat down and sang a favourite song of her father's—"Come, ever smiling Liberty." She gave great effect to Handel's music which she thoroughly understood; and as she had a very fine voice, it was really a pleasure for some persons to hear her.

Mr. Thornton was very much delighted, and he praised her so much that Mrs. Parker looked very wretched. Then Mrs.

Frederick resolved not to be outdone, sat down to play something extravagantly difficult, which she very nearly managed to do, omitting, of course, all the delicacies of the composition, which must be the case when people attempt to execute what is above their power. As there seemed no end to her performance, Mr. Thornton drew Constance aside and offered to shew her the conservatory, as she seemed so fond of flowers. They slipped out together, and when they were fairly among the orange trees, Mr. Thornton, first relieving his mind by a sigh, asked her what she thought of Mrs. Frederick Parker.

“Oh, uncle!” said Constance, totally at a loss how to express her opinion.

Upon which her uncle patted her on the shoulder, and laughed heartily for some time.

“Constance, is this true,” he said at last, “this report that you are going to be married to young Forde?”

“What, you have heard it then?” she said quietly.

“ That means *yes*, I suppose, that non-denial,” said Mr. Thornton, quickly.

“ Yes, uncle,” replied Constance. “ My marriage takes place so very shortly, that it would not be very sensible to deny it.”

“ When is it sensible to deny such things ?” returned Mr. Thornton. “ I hate all the mysterious nonsense that goes on with respect to marriages. For Heaven’s sake, if you are not ashamed of each other, say so ; and don’t try to hide it like two great ostriches tucking their heads behind a tree, and thinking nobody sees them,—which is pretty much the case when your precious secret is bandied from mouth to mouth all over the county !”

“ Well, uncle, you see I don’t try to conceal it,” said Constance, smiling. “ Now, do you think I might have a little piece of this verbená ?”

Mr. Thornton broke off a branch for her, and went on.

“ In your case, the next best thing to

owning your match, would be to slide out of it altogether."

"Sir?" exclaimed Constance in amazement.

"His house is not safe," returned Mr. Thornton.

Had this remark come from Mrs. Parker, who had rather an irreverent manner of quoting scripture phrases, Constance would have thought it referred to poor Mr. Forde's morals;—and as it was, she was obliged to reflect a little, before she recollected that he was connected with a famous mercantile house in the city.

"Oh, is that all!" she said, with a cheerful air.

"All!" cried Mr. Thornton, "I took you for a girl of sense;—there's no living without money."

"Not what you would call living, uncle!" said Constance, "but I know that Mr. Forde does not depend exclusively on the house you mention;—and I could be content, were such the case, on a very little.

There is no want of sense in consulting one's happiness, and if money could secure mine, I should be foolish indeed to risk the loss of it. But if Mr. Forde does not deceive me, he is no more dependant on externals than myself; and if he does, the loss of fortune would add but little to my regret."

"Why the girl can argue!" said Mr. Thornton, rubbing his spectacles, and putting them on that he might better survey such a phenomenon;—perhaps they enabled him to discern that there were tears in her eyes, for he added in an under tone, "She can feel too," and taking her hand, he said: "Well, well, my dear, it will all turn out right, I dare say. I'll keep my eye on you; he is a very honest young fellow by all accounts, and I hope will make you happy—at least he had better," this remark was given in another under tone of a rather threatening description. "So we'll go back to the drawing-room, or mother Parker will think I've been signing a new will."

This idea delighted him so much that he laughed until he reached the drawing-room door.

The evening wore away but slowly ; Constance was heartily glad when they retired. She was up betimes next morning, and going down into the breakfast room, found Mrs. Parker knitting by the side of the fire, and watching the kettle which was set on a stand fastened to the bars of the grate.

Mrs. Parker asked Constance if she used an urn or a kettle at home, and whether she ate toast or bread, and if they baked, and churned, and brewed ; and if they had their washing done at home, or put out ; and then, by a transition which Constance was perfectly unable to follow, she began to question her respecting her father's views.

"Do you mean," said she, quite seriously, "that papa thinks it cheaper to have things done at home, rather than to put them out?"

“No, my dear,” said Mrs. Parker, looking puzzled. “I—never mind; let us go to breakfast.”

They breakfasted accordingly.

When they had nearly finished their meal, Mrs. Frederick descended, superbly dressed, and took her seat with a little bow, which might be foreign, but was hardly civil. She was pulling on a pair of gloves, which she found to be slightly spotted; and she began telling her Italian greyhound what a bad climate it was, and how her gloves had been spoiled. She asked the dog, if it didn't agree with her in disliking England, and if it had made a good breakfast. Of course, the dog would not have understood her if she had spoken English, so she had the consideration to address it in Italian. Mrs. Parker did not understand the language, it is true, but Constance did, which was more than Mrs. Frederick gave her credit for. She then rang the bell very loudly, and gave the obnoxious gloves to her maid, desiring her to bring down an-

other pair, after which she gave her dog some cream ; and then, without speaking a word, walked leisurely into the drawing-room, and began to practise music violently.

In the course of the morning, Mrs. Parker asked Constance to walk out with her, to which she readily agreed. The snow had ceased to fall, and it was a bright hard frost. Mrs. Frederick would not go out till after luncheon, and they put off their walk accordingly till such time as she thought proper to join them. She appeared wrapped in costly furs, gave a very intelligible look of disdain at Constance's bonnet, and then set off walking as fast as she could. She kept about fifty yards in advance of her companions ; and if she greatly exceeded that distance, she would turn round and wait till they came near, and then set off again.

After the walk there was a long interval of idleness, and then came the dressing-bell and dinner. When they assembled



round the table, Mr. Frederick shouted these words to Constance: "Have you been walking to-day, Miss D'Oyley?" which are worthy of being recorded as the only ones he spoke to her during her visit.

Constance went up stairs after dinner to write home; and when she returned to the drawing-room, she found it tenanted by uncle Thornton alone.

"Why, uncle, are you deserted?" said she, coming up to him.

"Mr. and Mrs. Frederick gone out to tea," he said, putting the poker into the fire.

"And Mrs. Parker?"

"Cobbler's night," said uncle Thornton, laconically, turning to look at her over his shoulder as he made a glorious blaze.

Constance smiled and sat down.

Mr. and Mrs. Frederick came home about eleven o'clock. The lady's first inquiry was about Rosa, the greyhound: "where on earth was it?"

Uncle Thornton did not know.

"In the kitchen, perhaps."

"Oh, Heaven ! I hope not ; the cook would poison her !"

She rang the bell.

"Nicole, go and find my poor pet, this instant."

"She is here, Madame ; she follows at my heel."

"Gracious ! Frederick, how ill she looks. *Sei ammalata, tesoro mio,*" said Mrs. Frederick, clasping her in her arms. "*Sais-tu, Nicole, si elle a mangé quelque chose dans la cuisine ?*"

"I will go seek," said the valet, and he disappeared.

Mr. Thornton gasped for breath. He could not endure the sound of foreign languages.

"Cook gave her one *morceau* of bread," said Nicole, returning.

"Bread ! Oh, Frederick !" exclaimed Mrs. Frederick.

"Upon his honour it was very extra-

ordinary the cook could not let the animal alone." Nicole was to tell the cook, "that upon his honour he would not suffer it."

"Bread—only little bit, sweet bread!" said the valet, humbly.

"Sweet-bread! Oh you may go, Nicole," said Mrs. Frederick, rising from her knees; "that won't hurt the darling, I hope."

"I wonder, ma'am, whether you would make half the fuss about a child if you had one!" said Mr. Thornton, now thoroughly wearied.

"When I have one, I'll tell you; very likely not," she returned.

"The pretty delicate-looking creature!"

Constance opened her eyes, and laid all the blame upon poor Rome.

## CHAPTER XIII.

Ast. 'Tis not in gold to dazzle woman's eye,  
'Tis not in pomp to shake her hearted faith  
From its firm limit. A true woman, Leon,  
Is mistress o'er the world ; for o'er herself  
She holds dominion, in the name of love.

ANON.

THE morning before that fixed for her return home, Constance found, on coming down stairs, great symptoms of confusion : sofas were being wheeled about ; chairs removed ; Mrs. Parker, with a troubled face, superintending the making of breakfast. Her curiosity respecting these preparations was soon gratified. Mr. Thornton had an attack of the gout. He was always unusually self-willed at such times, and he

would come down to breakfast, contrary to his usual habit. His servant helped him into the room, and on the sofa ; and then Mrs. Parker began to be very active in his service, teasing him with an infinite variety of questions, to which he returned very short and unsatisfactory answers.

" I fear you passed a sad night, brother," she began.

" Fear so, too," he returned.

" Take an egg, dear brother."

" Mistress Parker," said he, looking her full in the face, " I am going to starve myself. This is the last fit I ever mean to be troubled with."

" Dear brother, don't be presumptuous," said Mrs. Parker, affecting to tremble.

" Miss Constance," said uncle Thornton, turning to her, " is there a bible in the room ?"

" Yes, I dare say there is, uncle."

" No, brother," interposed Mrs. Parker, " not in this room."

" Are you not ashamed of yourself, sister

Parker," said Mr. Thornton, with every appearance of gravity, "to let a single room in your house be without a bible? I am afraid you are not half so godly a woman as you would like to be thought. I have a mind to tell the cobbler of you."

"Oh, brother, what a man you are!" returned Mrs. Parker.

"Pray, Miss Constance," resumed the tiresome old gentleman, "can you help me to a text that may suggest a cure for the gout, since Mistress Parker objects to the starving system."

"There are a great many texts, uncle," said Constance, seriously, "which recommend *patience*; and I believe that is more important to the physical condition of people in suffering, than they are often willing to allow."

"Excellent!" said Mr. Thornton. "I should not wonder now if you sometimes helped your papa to write his sermons."

"Very often, Sir," replied Constance, quietly.

A reply so different to what he expected, put the old gentleman into something like good humour.

“Do you hear that, sister Parker?” he cried; “if your cobbler could read running hand, you might volunteer your assistance in the same manner. By the bye, why don’t you ask the man to-dinner. To-day is Sunday; between services, now, nothing could be more *à propos*. Pray let me have the pleasure of seeing him at your hospitable board.”

Mrs. Parker looked all delight.

“Dear brother, you are goodness itself,” she cried; “I will certainly do so; but I thought that you—”

“Old, worn-out prejudices,” said the old gentleman, with his peculiar smile, which was always accompanied by a quaint elongation of the upper lip. “I hope to meet him to-day, remember. I can’t go to church, and may pick up something that— And now, as you have finished your breakfast, leave Constance and me to chat

together till church-time ; there's a good soul."

Now Constance had not the slightest partiality in the world for dissenting ministers ; but she did not like the idea that any one in the shape of a clergyman should be invited to feed the satiric humour of Mr. Thornton : so she slipped out after Mrs. Parker, and begging her pardon for interfering, told her frankly what she thought her uncle's intentions were.

Mrs. Parker kissed and thanked her, and went up stairs rejoicing ; for she resolved that her brother should learn that Constance had marred his plot ; and she thought it would nicely counteract the partiality which she feared he was beginning to entertain towards her.

When Constance returned, Mr. Thornton seemed to have fallen into a fit of musing, from which he roused himself to ask her what she was thinking of.

"I was thinking, uncle, how you order all the people about in this house," said she,



looking up. "People may well call truth a jewel ; for I am sure that it is by no means as plentiful as blackberries."

Mr. Thornton seemed much amused by her reply ; and after laughing quietly a little while, he asked her "If they seemed to object to his proceedings."

"Oh, no !" Constance said ; "not at all."

Then he asked her, if she had any idea why they submitted so quietly to his ways ; at which she laughed, but made no reply.

"Well, child," said her uncle, suddenly, "if you will come and live with me, I will leave you at my death everything of which I may die possessed."

Constance opened her eyes very wide, but the magnitude of the offer took away her breath, and prevented her making an immediate reply.

"I know that your engagement may seem an impediment," said her uncle ; "but when you come to reflect coolly, you will see the folly of marrying a man who is on the brink of ruin."

“I am sure, uncle,” cried Constance, indignantly, “that he does not know it. I am sure he is quite open with me.”

“Not know it ! Why ?” said Mr. Thornton, “because he is too indolent to inspect his affairs. However, it may not be : I hope not ; but the suspicion of such a thing is quite enough to justify your friend interfering and delaying your marriage, although I have another plan in my head for you, supposing you accept my offer.”

Constance could hardly avoid laughing, although she was very much annoyed.

“I am sure,” she replied, “that no real friend would ever advise me to behave so unworthily. Mr. Forde, uncle, selected me when very many richer and prettier women did not scruple to give him abundant encouragement—and he loved me for myself. I could not bring him wealth ; but I gave him back affection, as disinterested as that he offered me. I do not believe his affairs are in the state you describe ; but

were they in the most disastrous condition your fancy can imagine, it should remain with him alone to claim or to reject my hand."

"Well, but just listen to my scheme," said Mr. Thornton, "you must know that my estate joins the property of one Sir Guy Bohun, an old fool, who has a nephew"—

"Captain Bohun, I suppose?" said Constance.

"The same. Well, this old fool, who must needs marry, with one foot in the grave, not being blest with any family, his title and property must of necessity come to the nephew, who in due time will become Sir Something Bohun; what is the man's name, Constance?"

"I am sure I don't know, uncle," said Constance, laughing.

"Well, but don't you see this marriage would make you My Lady, besides uniting the two estates, which I have often wished to do; but for the soul of me could never

find an expedient, until I lighted upon this."

"Dear uncle, how very fast your fancy travels," said Constance, laughing; "suppose Captain Bohun and I should take an immense aversion to one another."

"I don't see that," said her uncle, "he is a very well-looking young man. I don't like your Mr. Forde, I can tell you; he has an easy, gay manner which takes very much with the women; but there's nothing in him, depend upon it. I tell you, Constance, if you don't jilt him, he will you, before the wedding, now. There's no steadiness in him; and I would not wait for him, if I were in your place."

Constance laughed more heartily than before.

"On my word, uncle," she said, "if I did not ascribe all this bitterness to your gout, I should be extremely angry with you; but as it is, I make allowances."

"You are a saucy girl," said her uncle; "but turn over my proposal in your mind,

and give me an answer before you go to-morrow."

"I had rather give it you now, if you please, uncle."

"I won't have it now. There, go along to church; don't you hear the bells?"

"Pray, uncle, does any body in this house go to church, or am I to attend meeting, this morning?"

"Church!" shouted Mr. Thornton; "that French doll goes to church;—she will take you. Never let me hear that you set foot in a conventicle."

Constance accordingly dressed and went into the drawing-room, where Mr. Frederick was sitting by the fire smoking a curious looking Turkish pipe, Mrs. Parker remonstrating with him on so doing, and his wife filling the bowl with Turkish tobacco which looked exactly like rose-leaves, and fortunately for the drawing-room and its inhabitants, possessed very little of the odious smell that renders our tobacco such an extensive nuisance. It was curious in

how very few words Mrs. Frederick made Constance understand that she would permit her to accompany her to church ; however the matter was made intelligible, and she went.

When they returned, it was just time to go to dinner. Mr. Thornton was better, and they all assembled in the dining-room. Just before grace, the old man glanced hastily round the table, and said quaintly to his sister :

“ Mistress Parker, where is the reverend gentleman ?”

“ Ah ! brother,” said she smiling and shaking her head, “ I took the advice of this dear girl here ;—”

“ Advice—what advice ?” exclaimed Mr. Thornton.

It was evident there was a storm coming, so Mrs. Frederick sat down with her greyhound on her lap, and told it in Italian that she hoped it would not be kept very long, (little treasure), without its dinner.

“ Ah ! we know, don't we Constance ?” said Mrs. Parker, looking very sly.

Constance had nothing to fear from Mr. Thornton, as she was perfectly determined not to accept the terms on which alone she could obtain his wealth, and although Mrs. Parker had placed her in an embarrassing situation, she possessed a good deal of natural composure, and she was less annoyed by it than most girls would have been.

"I will tell you what advice, uncle, if Mrs. Parker objects to do so," said she, seeing Mr. Thornton grow more and more angry.

"I thought, dear, you might not quite like it ;" said Mrs. Parker.

Constance thought that in that case, Mrs. Parker might as well have not begun the subject ; but without further preface, she distinctly repeated what she had said to her aunt, and on what grounds. She had passed her life with very good-tempered people, and she was not at all prepared for all the angry and bitter things with which Mr. Thornton retorted ; for all the reflections upon meddling, and sanctity,

and impertinence, with which her well-meaning step was visited. It did not improve matters, when she saw Mr. and Mrs. Frederick exchange glances of unfeigned triumph and delight.

“Come, Sir,” said Mr. Frederick, at last, “that will do—we want to go to dinner.”

This of course produced a repetition of the heads of discourse, after which they did go to dinner, with whatever appetites they might severally possess.

Now Mr. Thornton had been so accustomed to say whatever he pleased, without restraint, to all his relations, quite confident that they would be very anxious to be forgiven afterwards on the strength of his money, that he was very much surprised to find Constance apparently unconscious of his presence at table; and his anger being spent with his words, he felt embarrassed at not being on good terms with his favourite. Mrs. Parker did not venture to speak to her, until the interdict of his displeasure was removed by his



addressing her. Mr. and Mrs. Frederick never noticed her at all, and she sat very quietly, but without any awkwardness, which might perhaps be accounted for by the circumstance that she was going home the next day. And she was one of those persons who would not show, nor indeed feel any resentment on such an occasion, but would calmly resolve not to put herself in the way of such annoyances another time.

“You don’t eat any fish, Constance,” said Mr. Thornton turning suddenly to her.

“Not any, thank you.”

“Let me send you some, my dear,” said Mrs. Parker, directly, “I declare I quite forgot—”

“None, thank you,” repeated Constance, unable to restrain a smile.

Mr. Thornton gave one of his quick, acute glances round the table, and then asked Constance to take wine with him. She went through the ceremony.

A few minutes afterwards he sent his plate round to her, desiring to be helped to the dish that stood before her. She complied. As soon as it was brought to him, he exclaimed :

“ Why, it is curry ! Why did you send it to me, child ? ”

“ Because you asked for it, Sir,” replied Constance.

“ I did not know what it was,” said he. “ Take it away,—villanous compound ! ”

Constance did not seem to hear this last remark, and Mrs. Parker began to talk to her.

“ Did I not hear, love, that you had learned Hebrew ? ” she asked.

“ Yes,” replied Constance, “ it was the first language papa taught me.”

“ Hebrew ? ” cried Mr. Thornton.

Constance seemed to consider this as an interjection, for she did not confirm his doubts.

“ Did you not find it very difficult ? ” asked Mrs. Parker.

"Oh yes, at first," replied Constance ;  
 "it is as hard to read the letters and points  
 together as the treble and bass in music."

"Think of that, Mrs. Frederick," said  
 Mrs. Parker, "Constance can read He-  
 brew."

"I am really not at all envious of her ac-  
 quirements," replied Mrs. Frederick, shut-  
 ting her eyes, "particularly now that I am  
 so engrossed with that dear German."

"Don't you read Hebrew from right to  
 left?" asked Mrs. Parker.

"Yes, ma'am."

"And pray," said Mr. Thornton testily,  
 for he was determined not to be upon  
 neutral terms with Constance, and not to  
 quarrel until she made it up with him,  
 "pray, what good has it done you?"

"Reading from right to left, Sir?"

"No," said he, suppressing a smile,  
 "learning Hebrew."

"It has given me pleasure, and strength-  
 ened my power of attention," replied Con-  
 stance quietly.

“ Oh ! I forgot, you are a logician.”  
No answer from Constance. “ Perhaps you don’t agree with me in thinking that one language is enough for a woman to make mischief with.”

“ As she can only talk one language at once, I don’t think she is likely to be more mischievous with half a dozen than with one,” returned Constance. “ But I think the less mischief she commits at all, the better.”

“ Very well ; bear that in mind then,” said Mr. Thornton.

“ I am more likely to forget other people’s ideas than my own, Sir,” replied Constance coolly.

After this there was a long silence. He seemed to find that quarrelling made no impression on her, so he endeavoured to bring about a general conversation of a more amicable nature. This was difficult, as neither Mr. nor Mrs. Frederick would speak to Constance, and she showed no disposition whatever to speak to him. She

sat pulling to pieces the bunch of grapes on her plate, thinking, if truth must be told, about Mr. Forde, and his probable return to Elmsforde.

“What beautiful hair that girl has,” said Mr. Thornton to his sister.

“Constance, dear, do you hear that?” said Mrs. Parker, rising directly from table.

Constance looked up, and thinking merely that her aunt was making the signal for her departure, prepared to follow her from the room.

“Uncle Thornton said you had beautiful hair, dear,” repeated Mrs. Parker.

“Oh! he is very kind,” said Constance.

“What an idiot the girl is,” said Mr. Frederick in a whisper to his wife, as he held open the door for the ladies. “Any one else with her cards to play, would have secured at least a handsome legacy.”

When the gentlemen joined the ladies it was little more than three o'clock, and how the afternoon was to pass became a matter

of some conjecture to Constance. Mrs. Frederick, to be sure, had her greyhound, and Mr. Frederick his Turkish pipe ; but Constance finding that nobody meant to go to church, put on her things, and went to walk in the garden.

There was a broad gravel walk running along the back of the house close under the windows, and there she paced up and down, rejoicing in her own heart that she was not doomed to live with a person of so capricious and violent a temper, and wondering very much that Mrs. Parker should think any possible amount of money a recompense for her present endurances.

“ If papa and mamma were in want,” she thought, “ I could bear it. I would bear anything to supply them with the means of existence : but there is something in abuse, which no woman can undergo without feeling degraded by it. In the first place it is a species of injury that she cannot return. And many a person who would shrink religiously from rendering

evil for evil, feels, without analysing the sentiment, that a wrong which can be redressed, is already forgiven. To pardon a prostrate enemy is, indeed, a glorious revenge ; but to forgive, in the silent heart, an insult against which we have no defence, which may be repeated again before the sting of the first unkindness is worn out, this is indeed a virtue which man cannot in himself attain. And so," said Constance, stopping short in her walk, " I don't forgive Mr. Thornton for his violence. Papa though would say that I ought." She passed her hand over her eyes for a moment. " And I will ; I will call him *uncle* Thornton the next time he speaks to me."

At this moment a window close to where she stood was thrown open, and Mr. Thornton's voice called from it, requesting to know what she was doing there.

" Walking, uncle !" she replied, turning round.

" I should rather say standing still," he

returned. "Are you not afraid of taking cold?"

"Not at all ; it is a thing I never do. But, pray, is an open window a specific for gout?"

"No, mistress," said Mr. Thornton, looking very much pleased ; "although you care vastly whether I have the gout or not."

"I do really, uncle," said Constance mischievously ; "for you know I don't go home till to-morrow afternoon."

This reply seemed to delight him still more ; and after indulging in a hearty laugh, he said ;

"Come, I want to shake hands with you."

"Well, I should be exceedingly happy to oblige you," said Constance, "if I could reach you without stepping on Mrs. Parker's flower-beds."

"Oh ! never mind the flower-beds," said Mr. Thornton, stretching his hand out of



the window, and shaking hers heartily. "I respect you, Constance; and you are the only woman for many years that I have seen cause to respect."

With that, he suddenly shut down the window, and left Constance to pursue her solitary walk. At length, tea-time arrived, and, some time later in the evening, Mr. Thornton begged Constance to sing one of Handel's songs.

She hesitated, and said: "If Mrs. Parker had no objection—"

"What! have you not found out by this time that I am master in this house?" said Mr. Thornton.

"I beg, Sir, that you will undeceive yourself. I am the master in this house," said Frederick Parker, insolently.

"You are a puppy, Sir. Go and open the piano!" returned Mr. Thornton, with considerable asperity.

Mr. Frederick thought proper to sit quite still for about five minutes after receiving this command; but not being able to get

rid of the impression that his uncle's eye was fixed upon him, he went, at the end of that time, to the piano as if by accident, and opened it. However, that this indignity might not be altogether unrevenged, he talked with his wife, in Italian, very loudly during the song.

Mr. Thornton lost all patience at last, and requested him in plain terms to be silent, or to leave the room.

He retorted, that as his uncle could not comprehend a word of what he uttered, he did not imagine it would have engaged his attention.

Mr. Thornton called him an idiot ; and begged Constance, as a great favour, to give him the second movement of her very delightful song over again.

She went over it very cheerfully ; and Mr. Frederick threw himself into an attitude, and scowled at Mr. Thornton, in which pleasing condition she left him, when she retired for the night.

As soon as breakfast was over next morn-

ing, Mrs. Frederick's German master came, and about an hour was spent in gasping out the harmonious sounds with which that richest of languages is so abundantly furnished. Then followed a long dialogue between husband and wife on scented soap ; after which, Mr. Frederick put his guitar into tune, and then put it by again ; and then a painter came to take the greyhound's likeness, which afforded very active employment to Mr. and Mrs. Frederick for another hour ; and then luncheon was served, soon after which, Constance had the extreme pleasure of seeing the empty carriage roll up to the front door, which was to convey her home. Mr. Thornton had not yet made his appearance, and Constance was about to leave her adieux to him with Mrs. Parker (in which case, by the bye, they would have been sure never to have reached him), when he suddenly entered the room, with the assistance of a walking-stick, and took her hand to lead her to the carriage. Mrs. Parker followed

them close across the hall, but she was not able to overhear her brother, who whispered to Constance :

“ Now, what do you say to my proposal ? Yes, or no ? ”

“ No, then, uncle,” said Constance, “ no ; but with many thanks.”

“ Well, well,” he said, handing her into the carriage, and putting a small pocket-book into her hands ; “ God bless you ! If you ever want anything, ask me for it. Ah, Mistress Parker,” said he, turning round and confronting her as the carriage drove off, “ you have had a narrow escape —upon my word, a very narrow escape.”

## CHAPTER XIV.

Come cheerly, Theckla, be my own brave girl !  
See, there's thy loving mother. Thou art in  
Thy father's arms.

WALLENSTEIN.

Ah ! ninfa desleal ! y desa suerte  
Se guarda el juramento que me diste ?  
O condicion de vida dura y fuerte !  
O falso amor.

GARCILASO DE LA VEGA.

It was evening when Constance reached her home. Although she had been absent only a week, she watched every turn of the road with impatience, until darkness obliged her to desist from her employment, when she leaned back in the carriage, and amused herself partly with guessing whereabouts she might be at the moment, and partly with reviewing the events

of the last week. "So," she thought, "one word spoken would have put me in possession of a splendid fortune, estates, and carriages, and money, more than I ever dreamed of! Certainly, truth is stranger than fiction! But nothing ever was stranger than my good uncle Thornton; to ask me coolly to give up Mr. Forde. I am much obliged to him. Why, surely, that is Lady Hernshaw's shrubbery, and that the mill-stream. I am just at home."

The carriage stopped, the door opened, lights were brought forward, and Constance flew into the house.

"Dear papa, dear mamma," she cried, embracing them by turns, "am I not good to be so punctual?"

"Very good, my dear," said Mr. D'Oyley, smiling; "and your mamma and I feel particularly flattered, knowing ourselves to be the only inducement to your speedy return."

"Oh, papa!" said Constance taking a chair close to the fire, "how malicious you

are. Now, while I am getting quite warm, tell me all the week's news. Is Isabel come back?"

"I had a note from Mr. Forde this morning," said Mr. D'Oyley, "saying that he should be compelled to remain in town another week; but that, of course, he was hastening every body, by all the means in his power."

"Why, mamma," said Constance, laughing, "did you ever know papa so mischievous? I am sure I asked no questions about Mr. Forde. Perhaps you can tell me when Isabel comes back."

"She is not returned, my dear; but I do not exactly know her movements. Sir George seems to think that they will scarcely be back before the wedding; they have found so many things to do. Lady Hernshaw is resolved to have every thing in a style of great splendour."

"Do you know how Isabel is, mamma?"

"Sir George says that she is very much fagged. Lady Hernshaw takes her out a

great deal. Do you know, Mr. D'Oyley, I always pity that poor girl."

"So do I," returned Mr. D'Oyley; "but if my little Constance were not the steadiest person in the world, I should have been very much averse to her forming an intimacy with her, charming as she is, for nobody can have received an education like hers with impunity."

"I am sure," said Constance, "nobody can help loving her, she has the sweetest manners; and I really think she is not at all vain of her beauty—and such beauty!"

"Well, but as yet you have given us no account of your visit," said Mrs. D'Oyley.

"Presently, mamma. I am first going to make tea," said Constance, placing herself at the table. "I have not had that pleasure for so long. How comfortable we look; ten times more comfortable than Mrs. Parker in her fine house! Papa, have you heard of Edgar since I have been away?"

"Yes, my dear; I received an urgent



letter from him, desiring to be present at a certain ceremony."

"Oh, dear fellow! I hope you will allow him; though I fancy it is a certain cake to which he is looking forward the most earnestly. Another cup, papa? You don't pay any particular respect to my tea-making after all. But now for my week's adventures."

To her great satisfaction, Mr. D'Oyley treated Mr. Thornton's prognostics with great indifference. Mr. Forde had explained his affairs to him, and they were in a most prosperous condition; so having given Constance his letter, that she might look through it before she went up stairs, they separated for the night.

The week passed, and not very slowly, even to Constance; there were so many things to be done, and all their acquaintances happened to call about this time to see how she did, and hear what she was to be married in, which rather delayed the preparations.

“A note for me?” said Constance, taking it up from the breakfast-table one morning as she came down. “Mamma, Isabel is come home. How glad Lord Bevis will be, papa.”

“Ah, my dear!” said Mr. D'Oyley, shaking his head.

“What! you do not agree with him in his opinion of Isabel?”

“Not entirely. He believes that her beauty is the infallible sign of a disposition as perfect; he believes implicitly that if her education had marred her character, it would likewise have destroyed that exquisite expression which we all admired so much.”

“I think he is right,” said Constance; “but I may go and see her to-day, mamma.”

“Certainly, my dear; but we really must call on the Manleys, and then it is so long since we paid Mrs. Dyce a visit.”

“True; but I am not on ceremony with the Hernshaws, at least not with Isabel.

I can step in there after we have paid our debts elsewhere.”

So, by a little contrivance, Constance managed to shorten the other visits sufficiently to give her time to spend at least a few minutes with her friend before their dinner hour.

Isabel had just completed her toilet for dinner, and was sitting in her dressing-room beside a stand of choice flowers, with which she was feigning to be occupied, while Lady Hernshaw standing by her side was holding forth on some topic with great fervour. Constance just caught the word “Opera Box,” as she entered.

“Ah!” cried Isabel springing up, and clasping her in her arms, “here is this dear, late, naughty girl come at last. I was sure she would not keep me waiting till to-morrow; and I, being kept prisoner by this horrid cold, could not venture forth in quest of her.”

Lady Hernshaw embraced Constance with a great show of favour, and reminding

Isabel that Lord Bevis was down stairs, said she would leave the young ladies to have a few minutes' conversation together.

"You must time me, Isabel ;" said Constance sitting down beside her.

"Oh ! dear, Lord Bevis can wait," said Isabel ; "he had better learn that lesson early ; patience, Constance, is a virtue ; don't I talk very hoarse ? I caught a dreadful cold at Lady Amersham's ; but mamma's government terminates so soon, that—what do you think of this bracelet ?" She pointed to one that she had just clasped upon her beautiful arm—a gorgeous piece of jewellery.

Constance gave the bracelet a due share of admiration ; but she thought that the costliest decoration could add but little beauty to the symmetrical hand and arm which fell so gracefully on the sofa beside her.

"My Lord's last present !" said Isabel, as her fingers played absently with its flexible links. "What will he give me next

I wonder? I should think he had almost exhausted the invention of his jeweller. By the bye, Constance, Mr. Forde can well afford such trifles—what has he given you?”

“I would not receive any presents,” said Constance. “I told him frankly that if he wished to give me any by and bye, he might; but I would take nothing of any value as yet.”

“You are a strange girl, Constance,” said her friend. “I don’t believe you care for him; do you now?”

“Not? Oh, Isabel!”

“Well—not extremely—not extravagantly—own it now.”

“Indeed, Isabel, I cannot own that, even to please you.”

“Come,” said Isabel rising hastily, “I must introduce you to Lord Bevis to-day. It will delight him I am sure. Why, you would not wait till you see him in the church; you would scream, I am certain.

We will not run any risk of the kind ; I have grown very prudent lately."

" I do hope, Isabel—" Constance began.

" Hope ?" exclaimed Isabel ; " there is hope in sorrow, there is hope in doubt, hope in difficulty, in peril ; but there is none arising from deceit, except—"

" Oh ! then Isabel," cried Constance interrupting her, " be wiser than to persist in falsehood. It is not too late."

" No, as you say, not too late," said Isabel with a haughty smile, then changing her manner with her usual facility, she added ; " why, what a colour you have, Constance. I frightened you with my heroics, which after all, were meant only as a general remark. My Lord and I are the best friends that can be imagined, and he has just spent a thousand pounds in fitting up my boudoir ; to which piece of extravagance I could apply a very well-known proverb if I would ; but I thank Heaven I have not received so expensive

an education, as mamma would say, to teach me to talk proverbs !”

“ I cannot understand you, Isabel ;” said Constance.

“ And is not that the reason we are so fond of each other ?” asked Isabel. “ No two people can be more unlike than we are, certainly. Come, Lord Bevis will lose all patience if I loiter here any longer ; I have not seen him yet, since I returned.”

“ Then really I will not go with you,” said Constance. “ I will say good bye here.”

“ Nonsense,” said Isabel ; “ no—do oblige me, now. I would much rather it were so. Come, you won’t refuse.”

“ It would be difficult to refuse you anything,” said Constance smiling, as she met the transparent dark eyes of her friend turned beseechingly to hers ; “ you must do as you please with me.”

Lord Bevis hastened towards them directly the door was opened, and taking the hand of Isabel, began to express his

delight at meeting her again after so long an absence.

Constance was very much surprised, having heard so much from her friend against his appearance, to find that his deformity was scarcely apparent; and his countenance appeared so full of intellect and feeling, as he addressed Isabel, that she could not refrain from wonder at his possessing so little influence over her heart.

"You are so very kind," said Isabel with a smile, in which Constance alone traced a touch of irony; "I have to thank you for another proof of your attention—really you are too generous."

She glanced at the bracelet which she wore; and Lord Bevis raised the hand which he still held to his lips, while his eyes spoke the delight he felt at seeing his present accepted.

"And now," said she, "I must introduce you to my dear friend Constance. You are already so well acquainted with



Mr. D'Oyley, that I am sure you will be glad of this opportunity to be made known to his daughter."

Lord Bevis then shook hands with Constance, and expressed himself very happy in the idea that Isabel would enjoy the advantage of her friendship for the future. He believed she would derive much pleasure and benefit from her society, as he had done from that of Mr. D'Oyley.

Constance made a suitable reply, and being well aware that she was *de trop* in the present company, she bade Isabel good bye, and prepared to leave the room. Isabel who had been standing silent for the last few minutes, put her arms round Constance without speaking, and accompanied her to the door of the room, then clasping her in a long embrace, and kissing her fervently, she left her free, and turned hastily away. And Constance very often called to mind afterwards that when she last kissed her friend, her face was wet with tears.

When she returned home, she found a

beautiful bouquet of flowers from Elmsforde, which her mamma told her were left with a message that Mr. Forde was expected down that night.

She spent half the evening in arranging, and re-arranging her flowers, and assuring her mamma (who was sceptical) how very natural it was for Mr. Forde not to have written, in fact how unnecessary it was, when day by day he was hoping to come down, and see her. If he disliked writing only half as much as she did, the matter was easily explained. Indeed, the very nature of Constance was so opposed to suspicion, that she might be deceived a hundred times without learning the lesson of mistrust.

The next morning she certainly made a more careful toilet than usual. The fashion of her hair did not please her until she had altered it three several times, and indeed she might have devised more improvements, if she had not been interrupted by her mother's trusty old servant, Jane, half house-keeper, half house-maid, half lady's-

maid, who regularly paid Miss Constance a morning visit, to fasten her dress, and pay her some genuine compliment on her good looks. She used to say, before she knew Mr. Forde, that as the gentlemen did not think it worth while to flatter her, Jane tried to turn her head as much as a score of lovers.

But this morning Jane preserved such a total silence, that Constance was surprised, and more to break the stillness than for any other reason, she asked if there had been a frost in the night.

“Yes ! Miss Constance, a very sharp frost,” returned the maid.

“And how is mamma this morning ?”

“Your Ma is middling, Miss Constance, and your Pa desires you will go into his study as soon as you are dressed.”

“Oh dear ! I would have made more haste if I had thought he wanted me. Thank you, Jane ; my handkerchief. I am quite ready !”

She flew down stairs, and entered her

father's study ; as she stooped over his chair to kiss him, he put his arm round her, and detained her close to him.

“ Well, papa, I made all haste ;” she said.

“ I am very sorry, my dear child, to have to tell you some news of a very distressing nature which reached me this morning,” her father began in a low tone.

“ Papa—Harry,” said Constance turning white.

“ No, my dear ! there is no bad news respecting either of your brothers. I had a visit early this morning from Sir George Hernshaw, who informs me that his daughter eloped last night from his house.”

“ Isabel—and with whom ?” whispered Constance.

“ My poor child ! It is thought that her companion was Mr. Forde.”

Constance dropped her head on her father's shoulder as he spoke, and remained silent. There was a long pause, during

which Mr. D'Oyley stroked back her hair from time to time, a common habit of his when he was much affected. At last, Constance said :

“ I think, papa, I am stupified. I hardly understand you. Mr. Forde and Isabel ? ”

“ I grieve to say it is so,” replied her father ; “ your affliction comes from a quarter whence you least looked for distress ; but I know you will accept this sorrow with submission, you will be patient under it.”

“ When I know,” said Constance, pressing her hands to her forehead ; “ when I am certain of it.”

“ He came down to Elmsforde last night. He is missing this morning,” said Mr. D'Oyley.

“ And Isabel ! ” said Constance as if to herself.

“ It is indeed a heavy trial,” said Mr. D'Oyley.

Constance sat beside him some time leaning her head on his shoulder, silent

and tearless. At last she rose up, and said she should like to go to her mamma.

Poor Mrs. D'Oyley, having but delicate health at all times, was so overcome as to faint when she heard the news, and Mr. D'Oyley only waited to see her restored to consciousness before he sent for Constance. Her firmness certainly astonished her father, but he was not so ignorant as to mistake strength for indifference, and he knew that her seeming tranquillity was not assumed, but arose from the torpor of a sudden shock.

As soon as she stood up, she was surprised to find that she trembled excessively.

"I'll wait a little," she said.

She leaned against the table, and her hands grew as cold as ice. She felt very giddy, and her breath came with difficulty.

"Papa—I am ill," she said, "I had better lie down."

Her father caught her as she fell, and when she came to herself, she was lying on the sofa in the drawing-room with her

hand in his, and Jane, now crying heartily, bathing her forehead with eau-de-cologne.

“She is better now, Margaret,” said Mr. D'Oyley turning to his wife who was seated in an arm chair beside the sofa, and looking even more death-like than poor Constance in her swoon.

“Oh ! dear mamma,” she said stretching out her arms to her.

“I hope you were not frightened. I was very foolish ; but the room was very hot, and I was overcome for a minute !”

An hour had passed, and she did not know it. She would sit up and make the breakfast. Mr. D'Oyley in vain entreated her to keep herself quiet.

“No,” she said, “she would rather be employed ; she was sure her papa would let her have her way to-day at least.”

This, uttered with a smile that made his heart ache, procured his acquiescence in all she wished.

It was not until she was surrendered to the solitude of her own chamber that night,

that she sank on her knees and gave way to a torrent of the bitterest tears she had ever shed ; tears convulsively wrung from her which gave her no relief, but seemed to leave her mind free to more acute perception of the shock it had received. She felt shame—burning shame, that she had so misplaced her affections—trusted a man who was without truth ; that she had been so blind ; so vain too, as to fancy that she could secure regard ; and then to think that she had wasted her sensibilities ; loved, as if there were no fear of change ; loved as she meant that her whole life should answer it ; and having freely offered the dearest treasures of her heart to him, that they should be flung back to her as worthless, unconsidered trifles.

And Isabel, towards whom she felt the affection of a sister, whose warm embrace at parting she yet recalled—that Isabel should be a party in her wrong ! Captain Bohun's warning flashed upon her mind ; she had been the victim of her perfidy.



Isabel *did* make a system of conquest ! Constance wept in anguish—in anger, as she thought of the deceit with which she had been surrounded.

After a time she became calmer, she reflected that it was well this had occurred ; that if she had married a man capable of this inconstancy, she might have experienced his neglect, when it would have been too late to repair the error of her choice ; it was very well too that he had discovered his mistake in time. But, if he had dealt generously with her ; if he had told her his sentiments, or hinted them ; or let her see a shade of coldness in his manner, she would have been content—she would have dismissed him without regret ; but that he had not thought her deserving of his confidence,—well, he who was not noble enough to read her heart, was not worthy to share it. And Isabel ! she who had been so idolised, had returned the worship of her lover with as deep a falsehood !—Then Lady Hernshaw rose before her mind, and the

cruel urgency with which she had pressed her daughter to accept Lord Bevis. Poor Isabel was deeply to be pitied ! Perhaps she might have resolved to escape her marriage by any desperate means, and, in her agony, had won over Mr. Forde to her cause, by her unrivalled fascinations. She might repent, for the sake of Constance, a measure which she had not the courage to abandon for her own. But whether she had been betrayed by a long concerted scheme, or whether it was a sudden transport of passionate excitement on his part, and of terror, love, or misery on her's—she was left in absolute and hopeless darkness ; and at last her weary heart resigned its wrongs

To Memory, and Time's old daughter, Truth.

## CHAPTER XV.

He who for love hath undergone  
 The worst that can befall,  
 Is happier thousand fold than one  
 Who never loved at all.  
 A grace within his soul hath reigned,  
 That nothing else can bring.  
 Thank God for all that I have gained  
 By that high sorrowing !

MILNE.

THESE exquisite lines, and our language contains, I think, none that breathe a purer tone of feeling, are in themselves the best explanation of real love that philosophy can suggest. Adversity, which is the touchstone of character in every particular, tests with peculiar strictness the delicate and evanescent hues of the rainbow passion—

love. And of all adversity, the sharpest to a lover is the desertion of the loved object. A great modern writer has said, that no man remains the same after a disappointment : he is either hardened or softened. The same thing may be observed of women ; and one charge against the estate of single blessedness is the sourness of feeling consequent, it is generally supposed, on a disappointment of the heart.

But these noble lines teach in their sweet philosophy a different lesson. The heart that has loved may be crushed, but not embittered : and could we penetrate to the core those who accept in another spirit the frustration of their hopes, we should learn, I believe, that their vanity has been stung to the quick, or their interest hurt ; or their pride (God wot) humbled ; or the stigma of celibacy affixed to them, if they be women ; or the laugh of *their* world turned against them, if they be men. These have been disappointed in marriage, but never in love. For the beauty of love

is, that for the time the soul selects for itself another abode—even the person of the adored—and thinks, plans, feels, for that other one as it has been used to do for the frame it was wont to animate;—and this annihilation of self, though the metaphysician might assure you it was intrinsically selfish, can never be experienced without a temporary conquest over the worst part of our nature; and one victory gives power of resistance for the future; and power begets courage, and courage begets success.

There was a great deal of tenderness in the resolution with which Constance disguised from her parents the extent of her suffering. She was always, before them, employed, always equable, if not cheerful in her manner; and it was only by the marked injury her health sustained, that they were made aware of the struggle she underwent to attain composure. She wondered herself at the physical weakness which resulted from her overtaken

strength ; for there are some persons who are scarcely aware themselves of the depth of their emotions, till they note their inroads on the frame ;—which would almost support the seeming paradox that much goes on within our minds of which we are not conscious ;—a theory which if it could be well established, would cause some stir among the philosophers.

It was a mild bright morning. The bells were ringing for church, and about the gothic porch there stood a group of a different quality from that usually found loitering at the church door before service.

Mrs. Manley and Mrs. Dyce with their respective daughters, and Miss Browning, composed the party.

“ We are early, I fancy,” said Mrs. Manley, looking up at the belfry, and speaking loud that she might be heard above the old jangling bells ; “ we had better wait a few minutes.”

“ I think so,” said Mrs. Dyce. “ What a delightful change in the weather!”

“ Yes—but so unseasonable for the first week in December !” replied Mrs. Manley. “ I declare one might sit out of doors to-day without inconvenience.”

“ Oh ! let us be glad of fine weather whenever it comes,” said Mrs. Dyce ; “ we do not find too much of it in our climate. By the bye, my dear Mrs. Manley, what are we to think of this terrible business !”

“ Oh ! I never was so shocked in my life,” said Mrs. Manley, “ I declare ; that poor girl ! I quite felt for her.”

A common expression this ; as if to feel for one’s neighbours was a very remarkable and scarcely credible occurrence !

“ So did I !” returned Mrs. Dyce.

“ But that horrid young man !” cried Mrs. Manley. “ I never liked him : I always said to Emma, that there was something in his smile—”

“ So you did, mamma ; but this is something so atrocious.”

“ I assure you, my dear Mrs. Dyce,” said Mrs. Manley, “ I hardly slept a wink

the night after I heard it : you see I had been to Hillsted all day, and my maid had this story for me when I returned. I was astounded—a good for nothing wretch !—”

“ One really looks upon him in the light of a common swindler,” said Miss Dyce.

“ Oh ! don't talk of him ;” said Mrs. Dyce ; “ that dreadful girl ! it will come home to her some day, depend on it—so intimate as the Hernshaws and the D'Oyleys always were !—But these runaway matches never answer.”

“ Married in Scotland, were they not ?”

“ Yes, and now are gone over to France ; of course ashamed to show their faces in this neighbourhood.”

“ Ay—and you heard that Lady Hernshaw—”

“ No—what ?—do tell me—

“ Why, as soon as they brought her the news, she dropped on her knees, and vowed in the most frightful manner that she would never admit her daughter to her house again, even if she were starving. Then she



fell into fits which lasted nearly the whole of the day."

"Dear, dear, what an awful woman she is!" said Mrs. Dyce with a sigh.

"But, my dear friend," urged Mrs. Manley, "on such an occasion she was almost beside herself."

"True—but still a mother—"

"I wonder if she will be at church to-day," said Miss Manley.

"Oh dear! I should think not," said Miss Dyce.

"After all," exclaimed Miss Browning abruptly, "there must have been some very bad management somewhere. Constance must be a very clumsy girl. I rather think I could manage to keep a man, when I had won him."

"People say, my dear, replied Mrs Dyce, "that to keep a man is the more difficult task of the two. I don't know, my dear Mrs. Manley, (it is very wicked I am afraid to talk of such things on Sundays,) but I don't know if you recollect that old comedy

The Way to keep Him, Charles Kemble used to be so clever in Lovemore."

The thought would intrude itself into Miss Dyce's head, whether it was a greater crime to name Mr. Charles Kemble at the church door, or to select that spot for a catalogue *raisonné* of her neighbour's offences. But Mrs. Manley replied that she remembered him perfectly, and moreover that when he was young, he was very handsome; and then she remarked that it was time to go in, and accordingly the party, after another look along the pathway, entered the church.

One great reason for their delay was their anxiety to see Constance: they wished to know how she would look, and whether she would speak to them or not. There is always a mighty curiosity in a village to see anybody after a family loss, or any other misfortune.—It is amazing to see the pains ladies will take to get a good view of the person under distress; how they will turn and twist to pry beneath the black veil of

the mourner, and discuss among themselves the inroads which sorrow may have made upon the face.

When these good ladies took their seats they beheld, with some astonishment, that Constance was in her usual place in her father's pew. She must have come in very early, and it is not impossible that she did so to escape the very meeting they had planned for her. They listened very attentively, but they heard no sobbing from that part of the church ; a baby who was going to be christened, squalled once or twice ; but curiosity could not convert that sound into any human approach to the expression of grief. She turned over her leaves, and stood up when other people did ; once to be sure she untied her bonnet strings, but then the rectory pew was close to the stove. It was quite evident that she did not mean to treat the people to a fainting scene ! So they set themselves to investigate Mr. D'Oyley's sermon, and find out whether he introduced any allusion to late affairs in

the course of it ; but though he was very great, as they called it, about Jerusalem, they could not detect anything which might bear upon forsaken ladies or inconstant swains.

Constance meanwhile, having very patiently waited till every body was out of the church, and her papa come from the vestry, took his arm and walked homewards.

“ How very cold it is to-day, papa,” said she drawing her shawl closer round her.

“ My dear child, I am afraid you are not well ; every body is wondering at the mildness of the weather.”

“ Not very well, papa,” said Constance pausing to take breath.

“ I shall send for Mr. Martyn to-morrow, my dear.”

“ Oh, pray don't, papa, he will be sure to ask me if I have not something on my mind—or some horrid question of the sort.”

However on this point Mr. D'Oyley did not yield to her wishes, and Mr. Martyn did not put to her the questions she dreaded,

because the affair was too public to have escaped his ears. He advised air, exercise, and occupation ; for he was something of a philosopher, and there were many occasions on which he was more ready than his patients to throw physic to the dogs.

“ There is one thing, mamma, that I rejoice at in this affair,” said Constance—(for she could sometimes talk over the matter without emotion, at other times the least allusion to it would send her from the room in tears ;) one thing pleases me—my disappointment, as they call it, is something recognised. They cannot accuse me of expecting a proposal that never came. My case is too clear for misrepresentation—is it not ?”

Mrs. D'Oyley did not quite know what to say to this ; she had rather a more enlarged idea of village ingenuity than her daughter ; and her experience proved correct. Those to whom the match had not been confided, at the first, were jealous of that circumstance, and were glad to say

now, that Mr. Forde had been drawn in to make his proposal, and, poor man ! though it was very naughty to run away at so short a notice, perhaps on the whole, it was not to be so much wondered at. Then some doubts arose whether he had proposed at all ; young ladies sometimes made such strange mistakes. Then Constance's appearance came under discussion : some people wondered that she was not more resigned, and thought it very wrong of her to look so pale ; others said that she was a girl of no feeling, and that they could not have borne up against such a shock, not if the fate of the nation had depended on their self-control.

All these remarks of course, came duly round to her ears ; her friends contented themselves with abusing Mr. Forde violently and wondering how it was possible that she could have fallen in love with a young man of such very bad principles. Now Constance entertained some doubts herself of the degree of love she had felt for Mr.

Forde: a great deal of gratitude, with a very diffident and sensitive person, is a very good counterfeit for the tender passion. She had been astonished that a man so much sought and admired; so rich, so agreeable, should have selected her, and she loved him for it, not for himself. It was so disinterested in him, it touched the master-chord in her own heart. People did not know that her greatest agony was, that Isabel could have betrayed her. She already began to conjecture that the love which directs an existence, springs from a far deeper and more perturbed source than that from which arose her placid acceptance of Mr. Forde's suit.

But with respect to his principles, the second count in her indictment, she had the pleasure of knowing that she had not been so weak as to love a man of bad principles. Whenever a man does anything wrong, people accuse his principles—sometimes his character is in fault, sometimes his nerves! Mr. Forde was wonderfully particular in

his ideas of right and wrong, and Constance knew it. He was fastidious in his notions of propriety and honour. He could talk and feel with great accuracy, but his character wanted strength to oppose successfully a temptation, at the precise moment that it was offered to his mind. But for the temptation he would have passed through life with a reputation for every virtue under the sun, a great deal more extolled than those persons who had now the triumph of abusing him. For a little time, these conjectures sufficed to amuse the village; but one Sunday it was observed that Lady Hernshaw passed Constance with a haughty bow: it was their first meeting since the elopement.

This was decisive. It was evident to the whole conclave that Lady Hernshaw was offended with Constance, and after a long debate it was resolved *nem. con.* that Lady Hernshaw believed Constance to have been accessory to her daughter's flight. There was no other way of interpreting her man-



ner. The case was clear. There had been an understanding between them. Mr. Forde was not the lover of Constance but of Isabel; and Constance had feigned to receive his attentions for the purpose of screening Isabel from her mother's penetration. Dear, dear ! this was a shocking view of her conduct ; they almost feared it would look hardly respectful to Lady Hernshaw if they took any farther notice of Miss D'Oyley. She was very young, they hoped she would repent, and Mr D'Oyley was so highly respectable ; perhaps it would be kinder if they were not to cut her ; any marked difference in their manner would now be so prejudicial to her in the eyes of the world. *The World !*

Constance had been always a great favourite among her neighbours ; but a breath will shift the weathercock of popularity. She could not imagine the reason why people received her coldly, until these reports of her conduct came duly round to her. She was really quite indignant at

first ; for not having done anything to offend these people, she did not see why they should speak of her so unkindly ; but she reflected that they loved scandal, and did not particularly love her, and therefore it was all quite natural, and very common. She was then possessed with some vague wishes that people would speak the truth about her, and nothing but the truth ; but a little more reflection served to remind her, that it was not quite reasonable to expect them to depart from their usual habits on her account, and that the best thing was to take it quietly, and keep out of their way.

Worse and worse ! she was the last person they wished to see in their houses ; but she had no right in the world to absent herself : it convinced them that she was ashamed to shew herself, but it proved also that she had no idea of etiquette, and that she had thrown off even the semblance of good breeding, by thus neglecting her father's old acquaintances.

## CHAPTER XVI.

There is a kind of nature that clears up,  
The instant it beholds a trying thing ;  
In common evils hesitates and doubts,  
In ills of moment shews acute resolve.

SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

Poor Constance was very generous, very honest, very warm-hearted, but she was not old enough to be very wise. When she found that Lady Hernshaw's manner towards her was so cold, and that so important a meaning was attached to it by her acquaintances, she formed the resolution of calling upon her Ladyship, and asking her frankly what she had done to offend her, explaining at the same time the disagreeable impression which this change of manner

had produced upon her friends. This is perhaps what every candid person who knew nothing of the world, would like to do ; and anything more unlikely to succeed could never be attempted. Lady Hernshaw said what every other woman of the world would infallibly say in the same circumstances ;— she had not been aware of the slightest alteration in her manner towards Miss D'Oyley: she was perfectly at a loss to know to what Miss D'Oyley alluded. Oh ! yes, she did recall to her memory that last Sunday she had passed her without shaking hands ; but if Miss D'Oyley would call to mind her own manner towards Lady Hernshaw, she could be at no loss to account for any slight change, if change there was, in Lady Hernshaw's mode of address. —Miss D'Oyley had seen fit to preserve such a distance, that Lady Hernshaw really thought she must have imputed some of the blame to her, of the late unfortunate transactions.

Constance was extremely surprised. She

did not know that any difference with a woman of the world must be indelible, because if you attempt to explain it candidly away, you are told that you fancied this or that article of complaint, or that the offence of manner lay wholly and solely with you, not with her. However she did know that an altered manner cannot be sworn to, and therefore she took it for granted that Lady Hernshaw threw the blame upon her, because she did not wish to be on friendly terms with her again. With this conviction, she resolved never, if she could help it, to intrude her society upon her Ladyship ; but she supposed afterwards that she had been mistaken in this conjecture, since Lady Hernshaw said to everybody that she could not imagine what whim Constance had taken into her head that she never came near her, and that she had thought her a girl of too much sense to take offence at such slight causes as two or three which her Ladyship took

care to name, as unlike the truth as possible.

Constance felt much more than she chose to show, at all that was said of her. She was kept in a constant state of irritation and disgust at the falsehoods which obtained credit among those whom she had considered in the light of friends. The Brownings were ill-natured, and the Manleys were silly; but she was not prepared to find the Dyces so illiberal. She was heartily vexed, and sometimes very indignant when some fresh piece of scandal worked its way round to her. We know that the uses of adversity are sweet, but the paltry chafing of these daily annoyances seldom produces a beneficial effect upon the temper. Constance felt that she was growing bitter and disdainful—she struggled to repress these feelings, and she succeeded in concealing them effectually from her father and mother; but her health paid the common penalty of mental effort. She

looked and felt wretchedly ill. One day, as she was sitting idly twisting strips of paper into *alumettes*, her father came in with a letter which he asked her to read.

“ My friend Lord Bevis,” said he, “ writes so illegible a hand, that my eyesight is quite unequal to decipher his hieroglyphics.”

Lord Bevis had, immediately after Isabel's flight, set off for his estate in Wales, not even waiting for Mr. D'Oyley to take leave of him. He returned more strictly than ever to all his old habits ; and Mr. D'Oyley's hopes that he would one day take his place in society, were now totally at an end.

What he felt, and how he endured her desertion, were revealed to no one ; he had lived too much alone for confidence on a subject upon which few men like to be candid.

Constance read her father the letter, which contained no allusion to his feelings, except one slight sentence towards the end, where he had been dilating with much animation on some political topic.

“Recollect,” he said, “that my proxy is in very good hands, so let me beg of you not again to urge my entering the polluted arena of public life. If I have encountered such bitter treachery in retirement, do not expect that I could retain my reason, when exposed to the unvarnished baseness of the busy world.”

As she glanced again over the page, she felt that her father's sight must be considerably worse, if he could not make out a hand which to her appeared unusually plain.

A shock passed through her ; but she mustered courage to say, as she returned the letter, “Papa, I do not call this a very bad hand.”

“No, my dear,” said her father gently taking it back, “I believe the fault is with myself.”

“Papa, have you taken advice ?” cried Constance clasping her hands.

“Yes,” he said, “Mr. Martyn had told him that he must, for a time, be deprived of



sight. He felt very thankful, and he knew she would too, that a prospect of recovery was held out to him."

Constance could not speak ; but what a tide of thought rushed through her mind ! How much was in her power to assist—to console. Her mother's delicate health—her father's coming affliction ! Why, they could not do without her—it was very well she did not marry. How much of cheerfulness her exertions would add to their home—how much of real duty in their moderate household would devolve on her ! It was delightful to feel that she could actually be useful ; she felt strong and well already. She had no leisure to be sick, in such a stirring time.

After a little time, she rose, and kissing her father on the forehead, left the room ; —she was obliged to steal away and be alone, in the restless tumult of her thoughts.

I have said she was not admired by gentlemen. She did not go and sit over a

harp with a torrent of tears running down her face, playing little snatches of tunes between every shower ; (of all exasperating habits by the bye, that fragment-playing is the most intolerable !) she did not intend to be resigned and pensive, but resigned and active ; to make those she loved happier she thought rather better than giving way to despondency. She was just the sort of girl of whom the men always say, " She so dreadfully wants sensibility, she has no more feeling than a stone ; that girl has no heart," and other flattering tributes.

Mr. D'Oyley very soon determined to take a curate, and this plan caused some reduction in their income. Among other arrangements in their household, Tim was to be parted with. Constance was sorry for this ; but her father had found him a comfortable place at farmer Ridge's, and though he had been her *protégé*, she knew he would be quite as well treated, as he had been with them. So she sent for him into the dining room one morning just after

breakfast, and when he made his appearance with his odd little fur cap in his hand, she broke the news to him.

“ I’d rayther not go, please, Miss,” said Tim coolly.

“ Mr. Ridge will be very good to you, Tim,” said Constance ; “ and I told you that we are not so rich as we were ; and, therefore, mean to keep fewer servants.”

“ I ain’t hardly a regular servant, Miss,” said Tim, trying to look as small as he could ; “ and I’ve a many reasons for wishing to stay.”

“ I am very sorry to part with you, Tim,” said Constance ; “ but may I hear one or two of your reasons ?”

“ I promised Master Edgar to rear him a starling this spring, Miss ; and there’s always a nest in your walnut-tree.”

“ But, perhaps,” said Constance, “ you may be able to rear him one in your new place.”

“ Then, I can't a-bear strangers, Miss,” said Tim.

“ But,” urged Constance, “ they won't seem strangers to you long.”

“ And I like you to hear me read in the Testament, Miss.”

“ But you can read easily now by yourself, Tim ; and you can read the Testament after you have done your work, as well at Mr. Ridge's as here.”

Tim, having all his objections answered, put the cuff of his coat in his eye, and cried.

“ I promise you,” said Constance, “ that if we should grow rich some day, and you wish to return to us, you shall.”

He was consoled in a moment. Of course Miss Constance would be rich one day, like all the other young ladies in fairy-tales ; and he fancied himself, like the little coachman in Cinderella, driving her through the streets in a gilt pumpkin. Long afterwards, when he was pushed and

jostled about in the large farming establishment, he used to say: "When my young lady grows rich, I tell you I shall not be cleaning out the stable, or leading the horses to water in this way—that's all."

## CHAPTER XVII.

FRAN. Can you procure me a hundred pounds?

LANCE. Hark what he says to you. O try your wits,  
they say you are excellent at it.

WIT WITHOUT MONEY.

ALL these arrangements were hardly made before her brother Harry returned from college. Constance watched eagerly for the carriage that was to bring him home. She could hardly restrain her tears when it stopped at the door, and she hurried out through the snow to meet her brother.

She was not content with his friendly shake of the hand, and his "Ah, Constance! how do you do?" after a whole year's absence. She would have run into

his arms ; but he had been into the world. He had come home a man ; and therefore it was natural, she supposed, that he should hardly recollect he was a brother.

He asked how his father was, however, and seemed very much concerned when told of his failing sight. Then, seeing his mother coming through the green-house, he hastened to meet her, leaving Constance standing in the midst of the drawing-room, thoroughly puzzled by his manner. All that she felt distinctly was, that he was not the same brother who had parted from her a year ago.

“ Those plants of yours look in very good order,” said Harry, returning.

“ Yes ; I think, for the time of year,” she replied, hesitating ; feeling the same difficulty in finding something to say, that she sometimes experienced with strangers.

He relieved her in some measure from this embarrassment by asking her if she had taken lessons in singing, and then finding fault with her dress.

Now, her great object was to save her father expense ; and those who have tried, know that dress does not, as some people conveniently suppose, cost nothing. She was not dressed so handsomely as her taste would have suggested, if she had had no motive for her forbearance. She thought of sundry hints that had reached her ears respecting Harry's expenditure at college, and was not very much pleased with his ridicule.

“ Where is Eustace ? ” asked Harry.

“ Gone to visit some friend in Yorkshire.”

“ Are the Hiltons still in London ? ”

“ No ; they are returned to Hillsted, to spend their Christmas.”

“ What an antediluvian concern Christmas is ! ” said Harry.

“ Yes ; somewhere about eighteen hundred years old,” returned Constance.

“ I wish my father was come home,” said Harry.

“ Do you ? ” asked Constance, who be-



gan to wonder whether her brother really cared now about any of them.

“ Does Eustace like the army ? ” he asked.

“ Oh yes ; it is just the thing for him ; a lounging, loitering life, dressing and smoking, and now and then pretending to be very busy ! ”

“ I wish—but it is of no use wishing— ” said Harry.

There was a long silence, during which Constance wandered into the green-house and began to pull the withered leaves from her geraniums. She thought how striking is the absence of power which we possess over one another. All her most passionate endeavours would never persuade her brother, if he intended to relinquish the Church, from the line of conduct he might choose to adopt. All her love and care could never prevent her father from the annoyance to which his son's fancies might expose him. She sat down with a sense of utter helplessness, in mind and body.

"Why, Constance, what are you thinking about?" said Harry, who had been standing opposite to her for some moments.

"I am glad you are here alone, because I have a good deal to say to you."

Constance looked up, breathless.

"You know, some time ago, I dropped some hints about not liking to go into the Church; well, last week, I received—"

"Had you not better sit down?" said Constance, making room for him on the seat beside her. "Yes, go on."

"A letter," said Harry, "from my father, telling me that he would be the last person to advise my entering the Church, unless I wished it myself, and that sort of thing, and desiring me to fix upon some other profession."

"Well," said Constance.

"You know," said Harry, "when I could not go out to India, which I wished to do because I had read about the banyan-trees in Milton, I decided on the Church as an alternative by my own free will."

"I recollect it," said Constance.

"But hearing from you that my father was obliged to take a curate, and so on, I thought to myself that fancies were famous things when they did not interfere with other people's comforts, but that this was not exactly the time to vex my father, and that by taking orders I might assist him in his parish and save him a curate, and so on; and then, you know, as for disliking the Church, it only amounts to this: that one is unwilling to conduct oneself with the decorum necessary for such a position, which must be got over when there is real need."

"Oh, Harry, you are just the same as you were, not at all changed," said Constance, putting her hand in his.

"I *did* think," said Harry pathetically, "when I first said I would be a parson, that I could hunt and shoot, certainly, but that won't do in these days! Still, I should be worse than a brute to let that stand in the way of helping my father."

Harry was not very eloquent, but Constance never had listened to him with so much satisfaction. She felt perfectly happy.

“ But there’s one thing that rather annoys me,” said Harry, “ and I want your advice about it. I have been a little foolish, improvident, you know ; in short, I am somewhat in arrears in money matters. No, you need not look so pale, Constance ; I am not quite in gaol yet ; it is but a hundred and fifty after all ; a trifle to some people, though, you know, not to us, worse luck ! Now, shall I tell my father, or not ? ”

“ Oh, no ! don’t plague papa about it,” said Constance. “ Uncle Thornton gave me a note of a hundred pounds when I went to stay with him. I am sure I had quite forgotten it ; but it is yours with all my heart. But what shall we do for the fifty pounds ? ”

“ Oh ! never mind that,” said her brother ; “ I am only too much obliged to you

for your assistance. I will find ways and means for—”

“ No,” said Constance ; “ pay it all at once. There is nothing like getting quite clear of difficulties.”

“ If one can,” said her brother.

“ Uncle Thornton has often told me to ask him when I wanted anything,” said she. “ I don’t know why I should not tell him I particularly want fifty pounds.”

“ Nor I,” said Harry, laughing, “ if the old gentleman is at all inclined to stump up.”

Constance having had the meaning of “ stump up ” explained to her, agreed to write to Mr. Thornton, and her brother left her with many thanks for her assistance.

How happy she felt, when that evening her father took occasion to say that he had been very much pleased by a conversation he had held with Harry, may, I hope, be easily imagined by a good many people.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

ADÈ. These women have no hearts for danger, Ethwald.

ETH. None, for the angry strife of mailed ranks ;  
But there's a daring in their tenderness  
That sometimes will outshine our rougher metal.

ANON.

Now I look

Upon a scene of wintry dreariment,  
Pale, leafless, herbless, cold : on that black stream  
Black from o'erpowering white.

ELTON.

“ Do you mean to walk with papa, this morning, Harry ?” asked Constance as they rose from the breakfast-table.

“ Yes ; we are going as far as Hillsted.”

“ My love to Mary—and you, mamma, how do you mean to spend the morning ?”

“ I have a great deal to do upstairs, my love.”

“ Oh ! I remember my mother’s mysterious occupations in her dressing-room, when I was a boy,” said Harry ; “ what a vast tearing of linen, and writing on the fragments with a black-lead pencil used to take place.”

“ Well, I shall leave mamma and Jane to their cutting out, and go down to nurse Whitmore’s with the port wine you promised her,” said Constance.

Nurse Whitmore was a remarkable gossip ; and when Constance thought her visit was paid, and she had risen to go away, she was obliged to hear a long history of her nurse-child, who was a very troublesome individual at all times, and had lately been guilty of the several misdemeanours of hooping-cough, chicken-pox, and measles, one after the other, as fast as they could come. Then came a history of his father, who was coachman to Mr. Hilton, and who had been a helper in Mr. Willoughby’s stables, when Mr. Willoughby lived where Sir George Hernshaw did now,

and a very good gentleman he was, and gave a deal to the poor. This led to many affecting recollections of Mr. Willoughby's death, of poor Mrs. Willoughby, who was lame, and moreover unwilling to leave the room when he was dying, how the lawyer, who was her half-brother, supported her by the bedside, and how, after lying quiet some time, Mr. Willoughby felt over the quilt, and found his handkerchief, which he drew over his face, and when they lifted it off, he was a dead man.

Constance, who was nervously sensitive on the subject of deaths, cried at this recital, which very much exalted Mrs. Whitmore, who felt as well satisfied as an actor who has made his point and received his round of applause, when her narrative called out her young lady's pocket-handkerchief.

Then Mrs. Whitmore was seized with a lively desire to show Constance the nurse-child, in order that she might identify his



eyes with those of the young woman who lived as dairy-maid at Mr. Browning's and who was the mother of the remarkable young gentleman in question. Some minutes were therefore spent in shouting into the cellar, and the back yard and the garden, and some more in abusing him for not being forthcoming, and then Constance, who had a strong presentiment that it was drawing towards one o'clock, and that she would be scarcely able to reach home in time for dinner, wished the old dame good day, and set off through the meadows home. It was a bleak raw day. The drops hung on the bare hedges, and the boughs were stained with the rain which had fallen in the night. The pretty shrubs that straggled half across the stream in summer, now looked saturated with wet, and added to the dreary aspect of the rapid brook. It was swollen too, and boiled along as it neared the large arches with a hoarse and angry sound. At a short distance from her there was

a sturdy child tugging at the branch of an old hawthorn that stood roughly out over the water. As soon as he saw Constance coming towards him, the little fellow, aware that he was out of bounds, made a desperate pull at the branch. It gave way suddenly, and he fell into the stream with a loud cry and a splash, that sent a shower of drops into her face as she darted forward.

Without a moment's hesitation she plunged in after him, and seizing his frock, attempted to gain the bank ; but she had not calculated on the rapid current which she opposed ; the first step she made she lost her footing and was whirled along with the child still in her grasp, and her other hand vainly catching at the long grass and slender twigs which seemed stretching forward their fragile and ineffectual aid. She was out of her depth ; the stream narrowed ; the banks grew higher ; the dark trunks of the trees, far above her head, stood frowningly between

her and the sky ; the roaring of the mill wheels sounded like thunder above the rush of the hurrying stream. She was borne nearer, every instant nearer to those hideous arches which yawned as black as night over the furious milk-white foam that flashed beneath. Another moment, and she was thrown against a broken post which stood just above the water, the remains of some old lock or weir. She caught it firmly in one arm, with the other she pressed the child more closely to her. He was insensible, she thought ; his eyes were closed and his fair hair hung streaming over his face. She screamed for help, but the wind sported with her voice, throwing the sounds back to her, amid all the turmoil of the waters, like some dim echo. The mill was so near that she felt there were fifty people within call, who yet might never see her till her strength was wasted, and she and the child had floated down that frightful archway. The cold was so intense that she feared, every moment, her

limbs would lose their feeling and resign her to the waves. She looked up and prayed. Presently the child began to struggle ; she implored him to keep still, in tones whose agony was so real that he obeyed at once. She turned her eyes wildly round ; they then fixed on a small window of the mill that looked upon the stream, but so long disused, so thick with dust and cobwebs that no possible chance could bring a face from within to its darkened surface. At length she heard a step ; she could not be deceived ; a workman was returning from the mill by the path on the other side of the stream. She called, in vain, every note of the coarse tune he was whistling came clearly to her ear ; but he passed on—passed her without a glance and plodded homewards. Her heart sank ; she felt all the anguish of despair ; her eyes followed every step the man took, with an effort that gave to every pulse of her heart the duration of a minute.

Suddenly the man stopped ; he laid hold

of a young ash sapling. He had a mind to cut a stick. Constance called again, more faintly, for her strength was failing. The man took out his knife and began to cut. In doing so, he turned round and faced the mill. All at once he stopped and shouted ; then ran along the path till he came opposite to Constance.

“ Why, mistress,” he cried out, “ how did ye come there ? Hold hard ; I’ll go round to the mill and get some of the men to help you.”

From that moment her recollection left her ; and though she was drawn to shore still clasping the child, and though she walked into the mill and down to the kitchen of good Mrs. Barlow, she was aware of nothing that passed till she found herself pressed in her mother’s arms, and became dimly sensible of the figure of nurse Whitmore kneeling over her recovered child.

## CHAPTER XIX.

CLA. She hath said many things concerning me, and  
never a truth among them,

BEL. Then should I opine the lady lied.

CLA. Nay, Sir, she mistook knowingly.

ANON.

CONSTANCE was very much praised by two or three persons for her courage. Mr. Hilton took the trouble to procure her a medal from the Humane Society. Mr. D'Oyley's curate fell in love with her directly. Harry wrote some Latin verses on her exploit, and Edgar who had just returned from school, translated them into very bad English.

But it is an old remark that there are two sides to a question, and the reverse

of this was very curious and interesting. Several people found out that Constance had not saved the little boy, but that the little boy had saved her; she having been anxious to drown herself on account of her disappointment with Mr. Forde. This report spread like wildfire, having as Harry said, some foundation for it. There was no doubt that she had been in the water, and it was therefore most natural to suppose that she went in for so reasonable a purpose.

One of her most active partisans was her cousin, Miss Hilton, who was very warmly attached to Constance; and who deserves some slight tribute of praise for her friendship to a relation so much younger and prettier than herself. Mary Hilton was by this time arrived at that very disagreeable age when a woman who wishes to marry begins to feel very nervous as to her chance, when candle-light is welcome, and dress becomes a study not a pleasure—she was twenty-eight. People

called her plain, particularly common people, with whom roses are indispensable to beauty, but she was small and well made, with a great quantity of dark hair, a soft olive skin and large hazel eyes; her smile was charming, and she had the prettiest possible gentle way of talking. She rode well, walked well, danced well, and dressed to perfection. For the rest, she was thoroughly in earnest, and possessed a tolerable share of quiet contempt for society at large; for she had made the surprising discovery that there is very little honesty abroad, and being singularly upright in word and deed herself, she shrank from a closer intercourse with her circle of acquaintance than the customs of polite society demanded.

“It is very odd,” said Constance one day to her cousin, “that I, who have always been such a peaceable person, who never gossipped or told tales of any one, should have all these stories circulated about me. I do wish they would leave me alone.”



“ Why, my dear Constance,” said Mary, looking up from the corner of the sofa on which she was idly reclining, “ Edgar, dear, do keep the door shut if you ever wish your sister to get rid of that horrid cold of hers. My dear Constance, I must insist on carrying you back with me to Hillsted. Now I know you have as usual a hundred excuses ready ; but I am tired of this satin stitch, and not very idle this morning, so that I shall answer them as fast as they come. You go to Hillsted with me this evening.”

“ *A-propos* to what, I wonder ?” said Constance, laughing.

“ It would really be so useful to you, my dear Constance, to see a little more of the world. You can hardly form a true knowledge of people from those few you have known all your life. You see them too minutely. You must learn to generalize. How could you wonder that people should attack you, because you have never done them any harm ? A little ex-

perience will show you that your friends feel secure when they attack you ; they have all the pleasure and none of the risk ; they may put about all the stories they like, confident that you will coin no falsehoods of them in return. If you had a bitter tongue they would be kept in check by the fear of retaliation. No, my dear Constance," said Mary, taking up the golden scissors which hung to a chain at her girdle, and carefully smoothing the edge of her cambric, "they have you at a disadvantage."

"It is very provoking," said Constance ; "but I did not tell you that Mrs. Langley is one of my bitterest accusers. She said at a large party that I had inveigled her brother, and then tried to drown myself on account of his desertion."

"Mrs. Langley !" said Mary, pausing to consider, "the lady who is separated from her husband. She used to be staying at Mr. Forde's. By-the-bye, what is supposed to be the cause of her separation ?"

“No fault in the world, I believe. Not even the common plea of temper! The only reason that her husband assigned was that she crumbled her bread at dinner. Her hatred to me is inexplicable.”

“Why, my dear,” said Mary, “she envies your hair, or your complexion, or your voice, or she has heard you praised, or she feels compelled to respect you—any of these are causes enough.”

“Well, when she announced this suicide of mine before the party, a gentleman present, Mr. Dyce, ventured, from his acquaintance with my family, to express with some decision his unbelief in the report. Mrs. Langley turned round with her soft childish air, and said: ‘Dear me, what have I done? I did not know Mr. Dyce was a relation of Miss D’Oyley’s!’”

“Excellent!” exclaimed Mary. “I am such a student of character that I feel as pleased with a little bit of comedy as an artist with a characteristic face. A re-

lation of Miss D'Oyley's! 'The force of satire could no farther go!' If our comedy were as delicate, or our audience as intuitive as the French, what a nice point it would make for a vaudeville. It certainly was a masterly stroke of ill-nature!"

And here Mary indulged in a merry ringing laugh, in which Constance joined very much against her will.

"Ah! Mary," said she, "there is no amusement in such things when they concern yourself."

"Constance, dear," said Mary, "just look in that glass. Yes, blush, and then turn your mind's eye upon Mrs. Langley's face. Without prejudice, a respectable baboon has much more reason to be vain of its personal advantages. Does not the survey present a very easy solution of the problem? By the bye, dear, where do you buy your Moravian cotton? Mine breaks with every stitch."

"I never do that sort of work," said Constance.

"Edgar, stir the fire," said Mary, laughing, "your sister looks so cold."

"Cross, you mean," said Constance, smiling again.

"Puzzled that I cannot feel indignant at the coarse slander of malicious woman. Oh ! my dear Constance, when I was your age, how angry I used to be ; how my whole soul would rouse up at unworthy or dishonest conduct ! But time ;

Time and grief,

Fearful consumers, you will all devour.

When one has suffered much, the mind grows tranquil under paltry wrongs."

Constance, who remembered that Mary had some years ago lost her mother and two sisters within a few months of each other, sat grave and silent.

"Set out, dear," said Mary, "with a low opinion of mankind. The first trouble is generally the least."

"Is that charitable?" asked Constance.

"Very much so," returned Mary. "For the generality of people being, take my word for it, good for very little, if you expect from them constancy, or truth, or self-denial, or any thing beyond little current virtues, you will be disappointed, and disappointment is always angry. Oh, your misanthrope is your only true philanthropist!"

"Well," said Constance, "I'll think about it; and in the meantime let us go to luncheon."

"No, first I shall go to my uncle and aunt, and convince them that it is proper for you to return with me this afternoon."

"If I really thought I was not wanted—," said Constance.

"Now I do like the conceit of that idea," returned Mary, laughing. "What possible use can they make of you now Edgar is at home to read and write, and walk out with your dear father—."

"But Edgar reads with such a tone," said Constance.

"Which he will never get rid of without practise. Your going away will be a real benefit to the whole family."

"I'm sure I don't want her to stop," said Edgar, pouting ; "I can read to please papa, if *she* does not like it."

"What a foolish little sulk he is in," said Constance putting her arm round his neck, and so leading him out of the room ; "and all because he hears a tiny bit of ugly truth."

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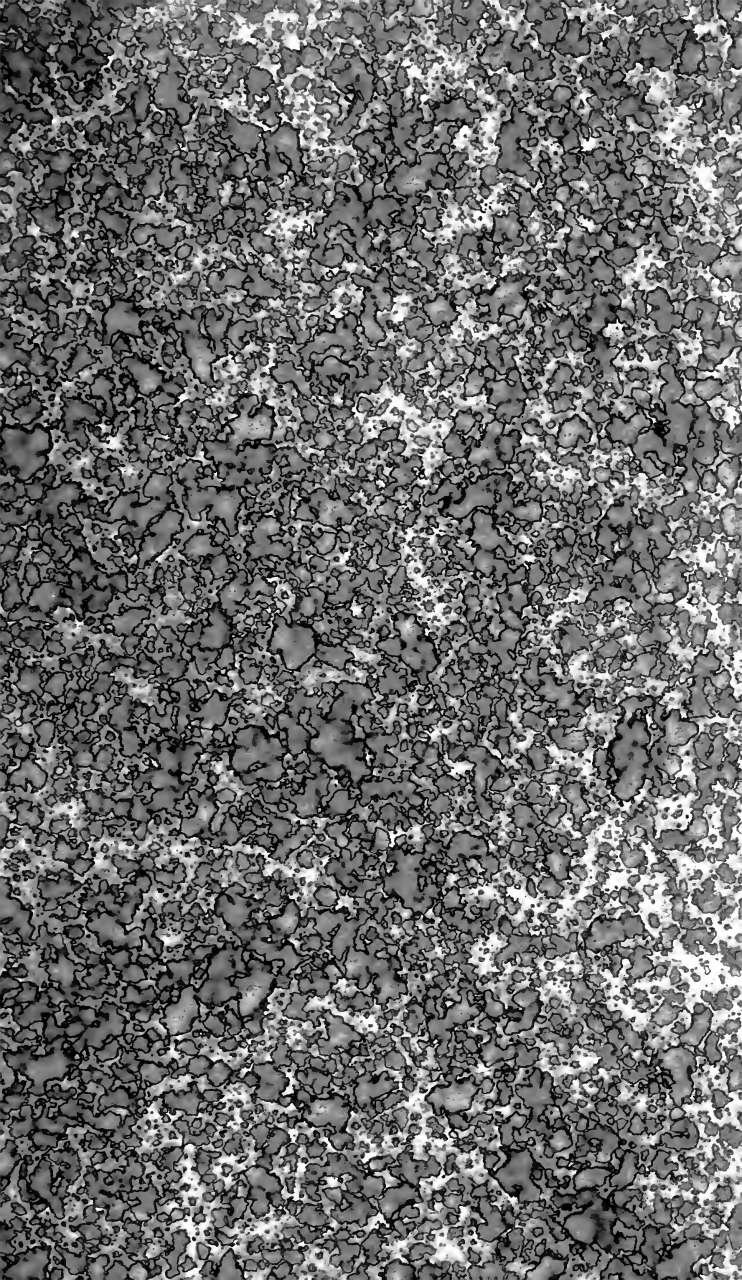












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